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OF
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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BEING

A REPLACEMENT OF THE FALSE BY THE TRUE

FROM THE ELIZABETHAN CONQUEST
TO
THE LEGISLATIVE UNION OF 1800

BY

T. DUNBAR INGRAM, LL.D.

IN TWO VOLUMES
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CHAPTER XVII.

THE OFFER OF A COMMERCIAL UNION. ITS REJECTION.

Two months after the address of the Irish Commons to the King, the session of the British Parliament closed, and Pitt had some leisure to devote to the great question of a commercial treaty between the two countries. Assisted by Orde, Chief Secretary for Ireland, Foster, the Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, and Beresford, Chief Commissioner of the Irish Revenue, he entered on the matter. Pitt's idea, to use his own words, was "to give Ireland an almost unlimited communication of commercial advantages, if we can receive in return some security that her strength and riches will be our benefit, and that she will contribute from time to time in their increasing proportions to the common exigencies of the empire".[1] All he desired was that some mode and time of contribution, accommodated in any manner to the temper of Ireland, should be fixed, and that the benefits should be reciprocal.[2] Before the Imperial Parliament met, Pitt and his Cabinet had agreed on the general principles which were to form a groundwork for a final and conclusive settlement between Great Britain and Ireland. On the 25th of January 1785, the King, in his speech at the opening of Parliament, recommended to its "earnest attention the adjustment of such points in the commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland as are not yet finally arranged: the system which will unite both kingdoms the most closely on principles of reciprocal advantage, will, I am persuaded, best insure the general prosperity of my dominions".[1] Pitt digested his plan into ten propositions, and for the purpose of knowing what the Irish Parliament would accept and grant in return, sent them over to Orde to be laid before that Assembly. They were there agreed to with the exception of the last—the tenth. This proposition originally stood thus: "that for the protection of trade, whatever sum the gross Hereditary Revenue of this kingdom [after deducting all drawbacks, repayments, or bounties granted in the nature of drawbacks] shall produce annually over and above the sum of £   , should be appropriated towards the support of the naval force of the empire in such manner as the Parliament of this kingdom shall direct". Pitt left it to the Irish Parliament to fill in the amount which the Hereditary Revenue had, on an average of some years, produced.

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[1] *Correspondence between Pitt and the Duke of Rutland*, p. 43.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 53.

Grattan objected to this plan, and proposed that no surplus should be granted except in those years in which the annual revenue equalled the expenditure. Accordingly the tenth proposition was divided into two; the first of which merely declared that it was desirable to prevent an accumulation of debt; the second provided that whatever sum the gross Hereditary Revenue [after deducting drawbacks, etc.] should produce over and above the sum of £656,000 in those years wherein the revenue equalled the expenditure, should be appropriated to the support of the naval force of the empire, in such manner as the Parliament of Ireland should direct. These eleven propositions were known as the Irish propositions to distinguish them from the resolutions which passed the Imperial Parliament.[2]

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[1] *Parliamentary History*, xxiv., p. 1,382.

[2] The younger Grattan seizes this opportunity to narrate one of his fables, in which he is, of course, followed by Mr. Lecky. Grattan says:

It is manifest that, if Pitt's proposition had been accepted, it would not have required a penny from Ireland, until her wealth and prosperity had been developed by the new concessions to her commerce proposed in the treaty. The contribution to be granted under Pitt's proposition, namely, the surplus of the Hereditary Revenue, after deducting £656,000 for the support of the Irish establishments, would have been exactly commensurate with the benefits Ireland would reap from the new arrangement. If that arrangement was followed by an increase of commerce, wealth and population, the increase was to be devoted to the defence of the empire. If no such results ensued, Ireland would not contribute anything. Pitt's plan was tantamount to a declaration of this kind: "I am about to offer you facilities for extending your commerce such as you never before possessed. I believe they will be followed by a great increase in your trade, but as you may not think so, keep your revenue as it is at present. All I ask is, that if there be a surplus arising from the extension of commerce now granted to you, it shall be devoted to our common safety."

On the other hand, Grattan's plan, that the surplus should be paid only in the years wherein the revenue and expenditure were equal, was entirely illusory. Pitt desired, as he said in the British Commons, "to ensure to Ireland the permanent and irrevocable enjoyment of commercial advantages, so he expected in return that Ireland would secure to

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"On the present occasion the minister (Foster) induced the Parliament to believe that the propositions would be acceded to, and procured a supply of £140,000". The Speaker of the Commons, in his address to the Lord-Lieutenant, gave the true reason for raising this supply. "Though to put an end to the ruinous practice of running in debt, they (the Commons) have found themselves under a necessity of imposing additional taxes to the amount of about £140,000 a year," etc. (*Irish Debates*, v., p. 97). See also a Resolution of the House to the same effect (*Ib.*, vi., p. 96.; *Commons' Journals*, xii., p. 39).

England an aid as permanent and irrevocable".[1] The Government had no control whatever over a very large part of Irish expenditure, and no dependence could be placed on the promises or assurances of the Irish Parliament, which was increasing its expenditure, and borrowing every year without an effort to equalise its revenue and expenses. The funded debt of Ireland, which need never have existed but for wilful waste, was in 1785 £2,181,501, and the nation was also liable to the payment of life annuities on a sum of £740,000 at very high rates.[2] This debt would never have arisen but for the enormous grants of public money, nominally for the improvement of the country, but very largely for party jobs. In February 1786, the Accountant-General stated in the Commons that, in the twenty-five years subsequent to 1760, two millions seven hundred thousand pounds, or half a million more than the whole funded debt, had been granted in premiums and parliamentary grants. "The fact is," he continued, "that all the expenses that are within the authority of Government are within the income; but premiums on the export of several articles, interior premiums for the encouragement of manufactures, the premiums on bringing corn to Dublin, and all other bounties and premiums, may come to any amount".[3] Two years later, the same officer, dropping the limit of twenty-five years, told the Commons: "your debt, three times told, does not amount to the sums that have been paid in premiums, bounties, king's letters, and parliamentary grants for public purposes…a sum altogether not less than £7,122,000… The more he saw the more he wondered what is become of a sum of money that was sufficient to cover the whole kingdom with gold leaf."[4] In addition, the Parliament had anticipated the revenue of the country to such an extent by the Appropriated Duties, and had encouraged such a laxity and extravagance in its collection, that out of a revenue of £1,300,000 only £800,000 was applicable to the current expenses of the nation, the remainder, *viz.*, £500,000, not being subject to the control of the Government. For many years before the proposal of the treaty, the Irish revenue had not equalled the expenditure in any one year; "in the last ten years," said the same gentleman in 1786, "one year with another, the expenses of the country had exceeded its income about two hundred thousand a year, including the money borrowed on life annuities".[1] Pitt therefore could not accept Grattan's amendment; and, on bringing forward the propositions a second time in the British Commons, struck out the words which made the contribution of Ireland conditional on an equilibrium between her revenue and expenditure.

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[1] *Parliamentary History*, xxv., p. 326.

[2] *Irish Debates*, vi., p. 125. £440,000 at 6 per cent., and £300,000 at 7½ per cent.

[3] *Irish Debates*, vi., p. 102.

[4] *Ib.*, viii., p. 422.

Before we proceed farther, it is desirable to state the actual commercial position of Ireland at the time when the treaty of Union was offered.

Ireland, being an independent nation, could trade with unlimited freedom to all the kingdoms of the world, subject only to the restrictions of her own legislature and the legislatures of the countries with which she traded. She could supply them with her own produce and manufactures, and in return carry home their goods and produce. The privilege of trading with the colonies and plantations of Great Britain had been granted to her in 1780, on condition that her Parliament should conform from time to time to such laws and rules as Great Britain should enact for regulating the colonial trade, and also adopt by her own legislation such duties on all commodities exported from

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[1] *Irish Debates*, vi., p. 103.

Ireland to the colonies or imported from them, as Great Britain imposed or should impose on the same articles. As the ships of Ireland were considered British built, she could even carry on a *direct* trade between the colonies and Great Britain, but she could not introduce colonial produce, through herself, and from her own warehouses, into Great Britain. This was called the circuitous trade, and was forbidden, to prevent Irish merchants importing the cheaper produce of French and other foreign colonies into Ireland, and then exporting it into Great Britain as the produce of British colonies. Great Britain supported her colonies by taking their produce at a high price, and in return required them to take her own. This mutual monopoly would have been broken up if the Irish merchants had been allowed to buy in other markets the peculiar products of the British colonies, and sell them in Great Britain as coming from her own. This would have ruined the planters and disturbed a long established trade. Though it was not inequitable for Great Britain to decline to receive from Ireland the produce of her colonies which she alone maintained, the Irish complained of this restriction.

Another perfectly just restriction was common to Ireland and every port in Great Britain, save that of London. The East Indian trade was then a monopoly in the hands of a Chartered Company, and every individual in the three kingdoms, not a member of the company, was bound not to interfere with this trade.[1] This monopoly had been confirmed by Irish law, and therefore Ireland was bound by it as long as the charter continued.[2]

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[1] Every Irishman might become an adventurer in the Company.

[2] *Irish Debates*, v., p. 379. The 33 Geo. II., c. 10 (Irish) enacted that any person going on board a homeward bound East India or China vessel, lying in an Irish port, without a licence from the Collector, should be fined £20.

The principal complaint of the Irish merchants was that the duties on some goods imported into England were so high as to be prohibitory.

At this time, the value of linen exported from Ireland exceeded that of all her other exports. The prosperity of this great trade was entirely owing to the support and favour of Great Britain, which took seven-eighths of the export, to the great loss of her own subjects. To promote this export, Great Britain laid very heavy duties on foreign linen. It was estimated that, in consequence of these protecting duties, the private consumer in Great Britain paid at least 25 per cent. more for his linen than he would have done if foreign linen had been relieved from duty as the Irish was. Irish linen first found its way to foreign markets by means of a British bounty on its exportation from England, thus sharing in the large capitals and extensive dealings of English merchants.[1] If Great Britain had withdrawn her protection, and admitted foreign linens on equal terms with Irish, this export would have perished, for there would have been no market for it elsewhere. Grattan, who was entirely ignorant of commercial affairs, declared in 1785 that other markets might be found for Irish linens. The answer of the Chancellor of the Exchequer was decisive: "The right honourable gentleman seems with others to undervalue the British markets for our linens, and that, if Britain shall discourage their import, they will find vent elsewhere. I will not pay him so fulsome a compliment as to say he understands commerce; his genius soars perhaps above such reading; but if he did understand it, I would ask him, where would he expect a market to favour the linens of Ireland; where would he find a market under Heaven for that manufacture which now brings two millions annually into the kingdom? Will Portugal take them? Will Spain take them? Will France take them? No, we know they will not. Will Russia, Germany, or Holland take them? They are your powerful rivals, and able to undersell you. . . . Your only market, then, is in the bankrupt States of North America, that have not money to pay their just debts, and many provinces of which, if they had the money, have not perhaps the honesty to do it."[1]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, v., p. 475.

When the eleven propositions had been agreed to by the Irish Parliament, they were forwarded to England to be considered in the British Parliament. In February, 1785, Pitt opened them in the Commons as a foundation on which an advantageous and honourable system of intercourse between the two countries might be established. They were bitterly opposed at this early stage. Lord North declared that in the proposed treaty Great Britain was to make large concessions—Ireland scarcely any.[2] Fox said that the propositions appeared to him to appoint Ireland the sole guardian of the laws of navigation, and grand arbiter of all the commercial interests of the empire.[3] Every effort was made to inflame the minds of the British merchants, who were naturally alarmed by the great changes proposed. To allow this alarm to abate, and to take further evidence on the probable effects of the new plan, its consideration was suspended. Several defects in it had been brought to light by the Opposition, such as the absence of provisions to secure the East India trade to the Company; to prevent the smuggling into Great Britain through Ireland of the produce of foreign colonies as the produce of British colonies; to preserve valuable patents to their owners; and to guard literary property, which was then unprotected in Ireland.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, v., p. 475.

[2] *Parliamentary History*, xxv., p. 330.

[3] *Ib.*, p. 333.

A few weeks later, Pitt again brought forward his plan arranged in twenty resolutions. "His present plan," he said "was nothing more than a necessary supplement to those resolutions which had formerly been adopted for the purpose of creating such a mutual interest as should for ever preserve inviolate and secure the connection between the two countries. . . . Its principle was that a treaty should be concluded with Ireland, by which that country should be put on a fair, equal and impartial footing with Great Britain in point of commerce with respect to foreign countries and to our colonies; and as to the mutual intercourse between each other, that this equality should extend to manufactures, to importation and to exportation; and that Ireland in return for this concession should contribute a share towards the protection and security of the general commerce of the empire."[1] The Opposition now changed their tactics, as the alarm of the British merchants had died away. On the former occasion, they had posed as protectors of British interests—they now assumed the character of Irish patriots. During the debate, it had been objected on the part of the Opposition, that, as Ireland was now an independent nation, there was no security she would adopt, if the treaty were concluded, the laws and regulations made by Great Britain for her navigation and colonial trade. The objection was sound, and to obviate it Pitt inserted a clause providing that so long as Ireland chose to avail herself of the treaty, all laws made, or to be made, in Great Britain for securing exclusive privileges to the ships and mariners of Great Britain, Ireland and the colonies, and for regulating the colonial trade, such laws imposing the same restraints and conferring the same benefits on the subjects of both kingdoms, should be in force in Ireland by laws passed in her own legislature. No sooner was this clause inserted than the Opposition, which had hitherto opposed the treaty as too favourable to Ireland, turned round, and, to create an alarm in that country, resisted the clause as infringing the constitution of Ireland. Sheridan said that it was a direct attempt to legislate for Ireland; and Fox declared that he would not barter English commerce for Irish slavery.

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[1] *Parliamentary History*, p. 577.

Of the origin of this extraordinary construction of the clause, Lord Clare gives the following account: "I have been informed, from authority which I cannot doubt, that this curiosity was struck out by a gentleman of distinguished ability, a native of this country who has long been a member of the British House of Commons; and that, when he first stated it to the party with whom he acted, they reprobated the deception as too gross even for Irish dupery. He told them 'I know my countrymen and be assured they will swallow the bait'."[1] Clare evidently refers to Edmund Burke. Whether or not the story be true, it is certain that the Oppositions in the two countries were acting in concert, and that Burke's conduct in the matter was extremely dishonest. At the very time he was opposing the treaty in the Imperial Parliament, he wrote a letter to a friend of Grattan which contained the following: "I hope you, on your side, know and approve the substance at least of the amendments [to the Irish propositions], for if you should not acquiesce in them, I do really fear that your situation is most critical indeed. This is the only moment, in my idea, for Ireland to fix her happiness, commercial and political, upon a solid and firm base. If pertinacity, or an ill-understood punctilio should be suffered to step in, to prevent the operation of the good sense of your country, and prevent our now coming to a final settlement upon some system that may connect the two countries permanently, and for ever lay asleep every motive of jealousy and dispute, every man either of wisdom or feeling will soon have reason to regret the day when the question was first stirred among us, and that anything was done to let all *loose from the hands of the old situation* before due consideration was had upon what should be those of the new."[1]

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[1] Speech, 10th February, 1800.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Opposition, the resolutions were passed by both Houses, and on the 29th of July were presented to the King in a joint address of the Lords and Commons. This address contained a full and explicit acknowledgment of the exclusive legislative power of the Irish Parliament "which is alone competent to bind your Majesty's subjects in that kingdom, and whose legislative rights we shall ever hold as sacred as our own".[2] After which a bill, founded on the resolution was introduced by Pitt and read a second time; the intention being that the bills approved of in both countries should have no effect, until compared and mutually agreed on by the British and Irish Parliaments.

Mr Orde proposed to adopt a similar line of action in Ireland, *viz.*, to introduce into the Parliament a bill founded on the Irish propositions,[1] and when it had been received, to print it, and then to pause for the purpose of collecting the opinion of the country on its provisions. When this had been done, the respective bills of the two Parliaments were to be compared, and the differences adjusted. Both bills would have been conditional until mutually approved by the Parliaments of the two kingdoms.[2] The bill as drawn by Orde, differed from the British resolutions, and contained many new provisions in favour of Irish constitution and commerce.[3] It was framed especially to soothe the jealousy of the Irish Parliament; and for this purpose, clauses were inserted in it expressly reserving to the present and all succeeding Parliaments the full exercise of legislative rights in all cases whatever, and giving to the Irish Houses a greater power than any Parliament ever before possessed, by placing in their hands, without the royal assent, the repeal of the treaty. It also made remarkable concessions as to the surplus, *viz.*, (1) any extraordinary expense, except in time of war, etc., producing an excess beyond the supplies granted by the Irish Parliament in any year, was to be paid out of it, and (2) the surplus was to be applied in the first instance to the purchase of sailcloth, cordage, naval stores, etc., the produce or manufacture of Ireland, for the use of the Royal Navy. The bill offered to Ireland every commercial advantage which Great Britain enjoyed. It would have been impossible to devise a system more replete with benefits to the poorer country, as an enumeration of the advantages offered by the bill will show :—

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[1] The letter is dated 13th May, 1785, and was sent to Sir John Tydd, from whom Grattan got it. It is given in his *Life*, iii., p. 250. Other statements in it are remarkable. "The Opposition flatter themselves you will object to them [the amendments] altogether, and that it will affect [? effect] the point they aim at so much—break up the further consideration of the business between the two countries. The clamour and the degree of unpopularity they have raised against the Minister is not to be conceived. Fox confessed that the amendments proposed did, in many instances, draw out the sting, and do away with the strong ground of objection to several of the resolutions; but both he and Lord North contended that there was no necessity whatever for anything more to be conceded to your country, and that no further commercial arrangements ought to have taken place."

[2] *Parliamentary History*, xxv., p. 982.

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[1] "I shall now in the most concise manner possible take a view of the eleven propositions of this Parliament in order to show that the Bill which I shall introduce is founded upon them" (Orde when introducing his bill, *Irish Debates*, p. 535).

[2] *Ib.*, v., p. 339.

[3] "The Irish Bill differs materially from those Resolutions [the British] and contains many new provisions in favour of our constitution and commerce" (Hely Hutchinson, *Letter to his Constituents*. This pamphlet is attached to Woodfall's *Report of the Irish Debate*).

1. The markets of both countries were to be open to the produce and manufactures of each other upon equal terms.

2. The linen manufacture of Ireland was to be secured for ever against all foreign competition.

3. The colonies were the exclusive property of Great Britain; yet she offered them, present and future, to Ireland to be held on the same terms she held them herself, without calling upon Ireland to contribute to their support or defence. There was one exception to this grant, but it was in favour of Ireland. For many years she had been allowed to import rum from the British colonies on lesser duties than were paid in Great Britain. This privilege was to be continued to her.

4. The navigation laws were to be relaxed, and Ireland allowed to supply Great Britain with the produce of her own colonies, provided she gave the same protection to their produce against the produce of foreign colonies which Great Britain gave.

5. The distinction between Irish and British sailcloth was to be abolished, and Ireland was to be allowed to furnish British vessels with her sailcloth. This provision, said the Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, would have been an immediate source of wealth to Ireland.[1]

6. Ireland was to trade with the East Indies exactly as Great Britain did, and, when the charter of the company expired, the possessions of Great Britain in the East were to be open to her. The condition attached to this provision was that Ireland should agree not to trade with the countries

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[1] *Irish Debates*, v., p. 412.

between the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Magellan. Ireland had never sent a ship to these countries, and no European settlement there would admit her merchants.[1] In return for this barren and theoretic right, she was now offered a certain and advantageous commerce to a great empire in the East.[2]

7. The right of fishing on the coasts of Great Britain and Ireland was to be enjoyed equally by both countries.

8. Rocksalt, necessary for the Irish victualling trade and fisheries; bark for the manufacture of leather, which could only be obtained from England, as it would not bear the freight from distant places; hops which Ireland could not grow: tin which she had not; and coals upon which the inhabitants of Great Britain paid a tax of five shillings a chaldron from port to port, were to be imported into Ireland duty free for ever.[3]

9. Ireland was to export all her produce and manufactures through Great Britain free of duty, thus mixing them with British produce and manufactures, and giving them the advantage of the great capitals and extensive exportation of English merchants. This provision would for ever have prevented foreign nations from distinguishing between British and Irish manufactures, and would have admitted Ireland at once into every treaty concluded with

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[1] Hely Hutchinson, *Letter to his Constituents.*

[2] "She [Britain] offers an export of your manufactures, with all duties drawn back, through the medium of her company, to her East Indian territories, by which channel alone she can convey her own manufactures thither—the benefit of whatever revenue shall arise on India goods sent to Ireland, or a drawback on the exportations from Great Britain, which would give them to us free of all duties—and an equal trade with Great Britain in her possessions in India in the event of a dissolution of the company" (*Ibid.*).

[3] As to this section, see the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, *Irish Debates*, v., p. 476, and Woodfall, p. 110.

foreign powers. Portugal refused to receive Irish woollens as British: such a refusal would have been impossible in the future.

10. This treaty may be summed up in a question put by Hely Hutchinson: "Does Great Britain possess in any one part of the globe any one article of free commerce whatever, in her power to participate, which she does not open as freely and beneficially to Ireland as to herself?"[1]

On the 12th of August, Orde moved for leave to bring in his bill under the title, "a bill for effectuating the intercourse and commerce between Great Britain and Ireland on permanent and equitable principles for the mutual benefits of both Kingdoms".[2] It was very unusual to object to the introduction of a bill by a member except in extreme cases such as that of Flood moving to bring in a bill which had been settled in another Assembly. The present bill, and the whole treaty were the result of a unanimous address of the Irish Commons to the King, yet the Opposition, headed by Grattan, were resolved to oppose Orde's motion, and to refuse a temperate discussion or examination to a measure which they themselves had called for. After a prolonged debate, leave was granted to bring in the bill by a majority of 127 to 108. A majority of nineteen only was too small to leave any hope that the bill would pass, and the treaty was dropped.

The rejection of a Commercial Union which offered to Ireland complete equality in commerce, and opened to her a chance of competition with Great Britain on more than favourable terms, even in those points where Great Britain had the fullest right to exclusive advantage, was due to Grattan. It requires a study of the Irish propositions, of the British resolutions, and of Orde's Bill, to comprehend the crazy and pitiful nonsense advanced by him in this debate.[1] The suggestion of the English Opposition that the treaty was an infringement of the Irish Constitution, had taken possession of Grattan's mind, which, like that of James II., was impervious to argument, and mistook dogmatic assertion for reasoning. He knew absolutely nothing of the bill he was opposing. It was remarked in the House that he never once adverted to it, but directed all his attention to the British resolutions,[2] though the bill was not founded on them but on the Irish propositions. Grattan's objection to the treaty was, that to accept a partnership with Great Britain in her colonies and in the benefits of her Navigation Code on condition of re-enacting her laws in these matters, was a violation of Irish independence. If there was anything in this objection, then that independence had for several years ceased to exist, for the Irish Parliament had already accepted the colonial trade on the express condition of re-enacting British laws and British duties, and had declared in many of its statutes that it was reasonable to do so. A short retrospect will show this. In 1779, the colonial trade was offered to Ireland on condition that she should conform her legislation from time to time to such laws and regulations as Great Britain should enact for this trade, and also impose such duties on all commodities imported from or exported to the colonies as Great Britain should impose on the same articles, that is, not only the duties existing at that day, but also those that Great Britain should think proper to lay on at any future time. The offer was received by Grattan and the other members of the Irish

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[1] *Letter to his Constituents.*

[2] *Commons' Journals*, xi., p. 478.

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[1] The Irish propositions, the British resolutions, and Orde's Bill are to be found in Woodfall's *Report of the Irish Debate*.

[2] "The right honourable gentleman, in his arguments, has never once adverted to the bill on your table, but draws all his conclusions from arguments raised by his own imagination on the British resolutions" (The Chancellor of the Exchequer, *Irish Debates*, v., p. 474; Woodfall, p. 191).

Parliament with transports of joy. On the 20th of December in the same year, the following resolution was passed unanimously in the Irish Commons, "that a liberty to trade with the British colonies in America and the West Indies, and the British settlements on the coast of Africa, *in like matter as the trade is carried on between Great Britain and the said colonies and settlements*, will be productive of very great commercial benefits, will be a most affectionate mark of the regard and attention of Great Britain to our distresses, and will," etc., etc.

Following up this resolution, the Irish Parliament in the next year passed an Act with a clause to this effect: "Whereas such part of the trade between this kingdom and the British colonies in America, etc., as was not enjoyed by this kingdom previous to this present session, can be enjoyed and have continuance so long and in such case only as the goods to be imported from the said colonies, etc., into this kingdom, or to be exported from this kingdom to the said colonies, etc., shall be liable to equal duties and drawbacks, and be subject to the same securities, regulations and restrictions as the like goods are liable and subject to upon being imported from the said colonies, etc., into Great Britain, or exported from thence to such colonies".[1] The Act then proceeds to equalise the Irish duties with the British. This clause was repeated annually in an Irish Act from the year 1780 down to 1785 inclusive; the British conditions were observed, the British duty was recited, and the British duty was enacted in each year.[2]

These Acts furnish repeated examples of the willingness of the Irish Parliament to shape their legislation in exact conformity with British laws. To adopt British Acts in return for a grant so long as that grant was enjoyed, gave no alarm to Grattan or any other Irishman. The absurd doctrine that independent nations surrender their independence by mutually agreeing to limit the exercise of their legislative powers had not yet been conveyed from the British to the Irish Opposition.[1] Such agreements are to be found in all treaties between sovereign states; and without such reciprocal concessions no treaty could be concluded. On this subject, Pitt instanced the late treaty with France, by which that nation was bound to publish certain edicts as soon as Great Britain had performed acts for which France had stipulated, and also the proposed treaty with Ireland, by which Great Britain gave up full as much of her legislative rights as Ireland did.[2]

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[1] 19 and 20 Geo. III., c. 11, s. 9.

[2] 21 and 22 Geo. III., c. 5. 23 and 24 Geo. III., c. 5. 25 Geo III., c. 4.

The principle of adopting British laws was carried even further by an Act which was drawn by Grattan, Hussey Burgh, Yelverton and Fitzgibbon, in 1782,[3] when the excitement respecting Irish independence was highest. The annual Acts just mentioned referred to the colonial trade, but this Act extended to a concurrence of legislation in commerce generally and in the Navigation laws. It recites that it is the earnest and affectionate desire of the Irish people, as well as their true interest, to promote the navigation, trade and commercial interests of Great Britain as well as of Ireland, and that a similarity of laws, manners and customs must strengthen the harmony between the two kingdoms. It then enacts "that all such clauses and provisions, contained in any statutes made in England or Great Britain concerning commerce, as import to impose equal restraints on the subjects of England and Ireland, or of Great Britain and Ireland, and to entitle them to equal benefits; and also all such clauses, etc., equally concerning the seamen of England and Ireland, or of Great Britain and Ireland . . . shall be accepted, used and executed in this kingdom".[1] Hely Hutchinson contrasts this Act with Orde's Bill: "Compare that Act and the present bill. The Act establishes the British commercial laws, which contain equal benefits and restraints, as laws in Ireland, with a retrospect of 290 years; and extends the idea of similarity of laws between the two kingdoms not only to seamen, but to commerce generally. This bill makes it a fundamental condition of the proposed agreement, that the ships and seamen of both countries should, by the laws of both, be secured in the same privileges, advantages and immunities; but as to commerce, restrains the similarity of laws to that commerce only which consists of British property, and arises to Ireland from British concession, or is immediately and necessarily a part of that system, and even there binds the British legislature to the rule of equal restraints and equal benefits. . . . If the bill is unconstitutional, the Act is infinitely more so. But neither is subject to that imputation, because similarity of laws is a just and constitutional principle, if neither of the countries can be bound without the assent of its legislature."[2]

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[1] "Limitations, which arise out of the power of the Legislature, and depend for their duration on the same power, are not arguments against, but the clearest proofs in support of, legislative independence" (Hely Hutchinson, *Letter to his Constituents*).

[3] *Parliamentary History*, xxv., p. 764.

[3] *Irish Debates*, v., p. 474; Woodfall, pp. 177, 192.

If Grattan had read Orde's Bill, he would have discovered that it did not go so far as his own Act, which declared for an entire similarity of laws, whereas the bill only went to a similarity in the Navigation laws and those relating to the colonial trade; and further, that the portions of the bill which referred to uniformity of legislation were actually taken from the statute which he had helped to draw.

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[1] 21 and 22 Geo. III., c. 48.

[2] *Letter to his Constituents.*

Grattan's mis-statements of the commercial provisions in the bill demonstrate his inexcusable ignorance of a measure, the discussion of which he was opposing. Some only can be here mentioned. The bill opened the East India trade for the first time to Ireland during the existence of the company, and, in the event of its dissolution, an equal trade with Great Britain to all her possessions in India. Grattan urged that Ireland was to be prevented for ever from trading with the East Indies during the existence of the company, and also after its expiration except under British regulations.[1] The bill deprived the King of his property in the Hereditary Revenue,[2] and directed the surplus of it to be applied in the first instance to the purchase of Irish sailcloth and other Irish products for the use of the navy, thus insuring its expenditure in the country. This, said Grattan, was a grant to the King of a perpetual money bill; the establishment of a perpetual Revenue Bill[3]; a perpetual repeal of trial by jury; a perpetual repeal of the great charter, etc. He declared that Orde's Bill extended to the whole foreign commerce of Ireland, and regulated her trade "universally with Portugal, with Spain, with all the world". The bill did not contain a word respecting the the foreign commerce of Ireland, but only referred to the colonial and domestic markets of Great Britain, and the Navigation laws.[1] This latter misconception pervaded Grattan's whole speech, and led him to speak of the proposed treaty as a surrender of Irish legislative power, and transfer of it to the Imperial Parliament.

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[1] "Mr. Grattan rose to explain. He said that we were to be prevented for ever from trading with the East Indies during the existence of a chartered company, and from ever carrying on a trade to those parts, even after its expiration, except under British regulations." Attorney General: "The right hon. gentleman is totally and radically mistaken, and there cannot be a stronger argument for the introduction of the bill than he has furnished; for it now appears that he is altogether mistaken in his idea of the fundamentals of it" (*Irish Debates*, v., p. 380).

[2] "It has been objected in a neighbouring kingdom that the grant of this surplus is a diminution of the royal power and property. It certainly is so, and has justly and liberally conceded to strengthen the whole empire by a great commercial adjustment between these two countries" (Hely Hutchinson, *Letter to his Constituents*).

[3] "It is no part of the bill that this grant should be supported by a perpetual Revenue Bill. It would have been supported with good faith, but, like the rest of our revenue, by annual bills, in aid of the Acts of Excise, which are now perpetual" (Hely Hutchinson, *Letter to his Constituents*).

Flood also denounced the treaty as an attack upon the constitution of Ireland. He had argued against the Irish propositions, and was certainly opposed to any commercial treaty between the two kingdoms. As his character was well known to the House, he was treated with much greater freedom than Grattan. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said: "It would be absurd to follow him through all his errors: many of them the most ignorant child would be ashamed to advance."[2] Another member described his speech as "one of the wildest, most inconsistent, and, I had almost said, ignorant speeches ever delivered by a man of ability."[3]

On the other hand, the introduction and examination of the bill were supported by the members who had any knowledge of commerce or finance; as the Chancellor of the Exchequer,[4] Hely Hutchinson, the two Beresfords, Sir Lucius

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[1] In answer to this misconception, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said: "I rise to state the misconception of the right honourable gentleman, and if anything can show the necessity of curing the people of their infatuation, by publishing and explaining the bill to them, it surely is this, that a gentleman to whom they look up, and justly look, as one whose wisdom and virtue will guard their rights, is so very much mistaken. . . . It [the bill] enacts nothing . . . that is to give to Britain the regulation of our foreign trade with Portugal, with Spain, with all the world" (*Irish Debates*, v., pp. 473-74).

[2] *Ib.*, v., p. 410.

[3] *Ib.*, v., p. 418.

[4] Towards the end of this year Mr. Foster was elected Speaker of the Commons, and Sir John Parnell was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer.

O'Brien, George Ponsonby, Mason, Gardiner and Fitzgibbon. Foster pleaded for the treaty with real eloquence, the effect of which was greatly strengthened by the general belief that he of all men was best acquainted with the trade and commerce of Ireland. "If Great Britain," he said, "grants us a full partnership in all her trade, in all her colonies, if she admits us to a full participation in the benefits of her navigation laws, by which she has raised herself to be the greatest commercial power in the world; if she does not call upon us to contribute to the expense of the partnership, but merely to receive our share in the profits, and says, we may continue in that partnership only so long as we choose, can any man say the condition of it is a surrender of our legislature? Let us then look at the subject, free from imaginary dread of constitution. . . . I could run out for hours into the many benefits of this system, but I have tired the House too long; let me only implore you not to reject this measure for ill-founded, visionary objections, or sacrifice realities for shadows. If this infatuated country gives up the present offer, she may look for it again in vain: things cannot remain as they are; commercial jealousy is roused, it will increase with two independent legislatures, if they do not mutually declare the principles whereby their powers shall be separately employed in directing the common concerns of trade; and without a united interest of commerce in a commercial empire, political union will receive many shocks, and separation of interests must threaten separation of connection, which every honest Irishman must shudder to look at".[1]

Three days later, Foster renewed his entreaty: "I will stand or fall with the Bill, that not a line of it touches your Constitution. It is now left to the decision of the country:

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[1] *Irish Debates*, v., pp. 412, 413.

it is not abandoned, God forbid it should; and I trust I shall see the nation ask it at our hands. That we may be able then to obtain it shall be my prayer. The minister cannot promise—he has done his duty—and it will be my pride at a future day, when its real value shall be known, that I bore a leading part in the transaction; that I laboured to procure for Ireland solid and substantial benefits, which even two years ago no man had an idea of even looking to."[1]

This Union, if it had been accepted, might have proved the salvation of Ireland. It would have banished all commercial jealousy and rivalry between the two countries. A constant and uninterrupted intercourse would have drawn them closer, and united them in the bonds of common interest. Their mutual labour, undisturbed by duties or bounties, would have taken its natural course, and each nation would have devoted itself to the fabrics and products it could manufacture with the greatest advantage, and would have bought from the other what it could not make so profitably itself. But Grattan, who had not a particle of statesmanship in his composition, threw away what would have been of inestimable value to his country at a time when the gloom of coming disasters was deepening over it. From this time, deficit succeeded deficit, and coercive laws of extraordinary severity became necessary to control the increasing anarchy. In the North, republican principles, and disaffection to the Irish Parliament, were spreading rapidly. The empty and egotistical jargon, with which the French Revolution has since made us familiar, was to be heard at all the political meetings or read in the manifestoes of a growing and dangerous party. The expressions, majesty of the people, the wise and virtuous people, the yoke of slavery, the sublime affection which citizens owe to each other, august citizens, etc., etc., were as common in Belfast, as they afterwards became in Paris. Worst of all, a union between the Presbyterian revolutionists and the Roman Catholics, which was to be so fatal to Ireland, was being accomplished. Volunteers were inviting Roman Catholics into their ranks, and marching to their chapels to show their fraternal feeling.[1] In the South, society, as we understand the word, had ceased to exist. The civil power had lost its authority, and, in its stead, Captain Right governed the country. The peasantry throughout Munster were organised and sworn to obey him. He made laws "infinitely more effectual or better enforced than those of Parliament[2]". The state of the province was dreadful. It wore, as was stated in the Irish Commons, rather the appearance of foreign invasion than of intestine commotion. Private houses were attacked, the Protestants were daily disarmed,[3] corn was burnt, men were buried up to their chins for many hours or otherwise tortured, the King's troops were fired on, and large towns, such as Cork and Limerick, were threatened with blockade and famine unless prisoners were released. The Rightboys had commenced by reforming tithes and preventing the levy of parish cesses; their next step was to nominate parish clerks, and in some cases curates, and to decide what church should or should not be repaired. At last, they proceeded to regulate rents, to raise the price of labour, and to oppose the collection of the hearth-money and other taxes.[4] The extortionate demands of the landowners, and their shameful system of letting their estates to the highest bidder, had driven the tenantry of Munster to despair. Feeling the oppression and not knowing its cause, they attributed it to tithes, though they often paid six pounds an acre in rent, and received for their labour fivepence a day.[1] In consequence of this belief, which was encouraged by some landlords, the most barbarous cruelties were inflicted upon many of the Protestant clergy. Fitzgibbon put his finger on the real cause of these disturbances. "I am very well acquainted with the province of Munster, and I know that it is impossible for human wretchedness to exceed that of the miserable peasantry in that province. I know that the unhappy tenantry are ground to powder by relentless landlords. I know that, far from being able to give the clergy their just dues, they have not food or raiment for themselves—the landlord grasps the whole; and sorry I am to add that, not satisfied with the present extortion, some landlords have been so base as to instigate the insurgents to rob the clergy of their tithes, not in order to alleviate the distresses of the tenantry, but that they might add the clergy's share to the cruel rack-rents already paid. . . . The poor people of Munster live in a more abject state of poverty than human nature can be supposed able to bear; their miseries are intolerable, but they do not originate with the clergy; nor can the legislature stand by, and see them take the redress into their own hands. Nothing can be done for their benefit while the country remains in a state of anarchy."[2] The misery and destitution of the peasantry in the South were preparing the way for those mischievous emissaries who were a few years later despatched from the North to preach sedition and treason.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, v., p. 476.

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collections*, pp. 290-316.

[2] *Irish Debates*, vii., p. 18.

[3] In March, 1786, a body of Roman Catholics attacked a little colony of German Protestants in the County of Kerry, who had formed themselves into a volunteer corps, and took from them thirty stands of arms (*Ib.*, vi., 342).

[4] This description is taken literally from the testimony of members of the Commons (*Ib.*, vi., pp. 435, 441, 445, 446, and vol. vii., pp. 17, 18, 57-61, 195).

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[1] *Irish Debates*, vii., p. 62. Grattan says seven pounds an acre, and sixpence a day (*Ib.*, p. 337).

[2] *Ib.*, 58.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FINANCES OF IRELAND FROM 1782 TO 1800—CONDITION OF THE PEASANTRY DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY —THE REGENCY QUESTION, THE ROUND ROBIN— ALLEGED CORRUPTION—THE WHIG CLUBS.

In October, 1787, the Duke of Rutland, a very able and successful Viceroy, died at the early age of thirty-three, and the Marquis of Buckingham, who, when Lord Temple, had in 1782 filled the office of Lord Lieutenant, was appointed to succeed him. Mr. Lecky tells us that, at this period, "the annual deficit had disappeared," and that "prosperity was advancing with rapid strides".[1] The first statement is contrary to fact; the truth being, that during the whole existence of an independent Irish Parliament, there was not a single year without a deficit. The second requires a careful examination, as some Irish politicians at the end of the century maintained that their country had been prosperous for some years before the Legislative Union.

It was to have been expected that, when the members of the Irish Parliament had obtained their independence, they would have endeavoured to live within their means, and to establish an equilibrium between their revenue and expenditure. But economy of the national resources was unknown to that Assembly, and from 1782 we find a constant increase in their profusion. In a very remarkable speech delivered in 1787, Sir Hercules Langrishe enumerated the causes of the "exorbitant expense" which Parliamentary independence had introduced.[1] In 1789, the Chancellor of the Exchequer complained of the "monstrous expense" incurred for public buildings and inland navigation, and stated that the demands of Parliament in that year, for these purposes only, would probably amount to £324,000. At the same time, he specially called the attention of the Committee of Supply to "the enormous sums which the nation had expended on inland navigation without effecting anything except in the instance of the Grand Canal; in every other case, the projectors had not only wasted the public money, but injured themselves".[2] The result of this extravagance was a long and uninterrupted series of deficits. In 1783, the revenue was unequal to the expenditure, and £300,000 was borrowed.[3] In 1784, the expenditure exceeded the revenue by £102,292.[4] In 1785, the deficit was £123,311.[5] In this year, £200,000 was borrowed,[6] and new taxes to the amount of £140,000 a year were imposed: yet in the following year, *viz.*, 1786, the deficit was £106,148.[7] In 1787, it was £180,052.[8] In

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[1] *History*, vi., p. 412.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, vii., p. 136. [2] *Ib.*, ix., p. 159.

[3] Clarendon, *Revenue and Finances of Ireland*, p. 114.

[4] Report of the Committee of Accounts, *Commons' Journals*, xii., Append., p. 103.

[5] Report, etc., *Ib.*

[6] With this loan a strange system was begun. To make it appear that the loan was raised at a low rate of interest, tickets in the public lottery were given to the subscribers at a much cheaper price than they brought in the market. In the present instance, every subscriber of £1,000, that is, £750 in debentures, and £250 in Treasury bills, received 160 lottery tickets of £5 each at par. By these means, £150,000 was borrowed in debentures at 4 per cent., and £50,000 by bills at £4 11s. 3d. per cent. (*Commons' Journals*, Append., p. 398). In fact, every subscriber of £1,000 obtained a bonus of at least £160. Later, this system was carried farther, and gave rise to the reduction in the interest on the national debt, mentioned by Mr. Lecky as a proof of the prosperity of the country.

[7] Report of the Committee of Accounts, *Commons' Journals*, xii., Append., p. 436. *Irish Debates*, viii., p. 75.

[8] Report, etc., *Ib.*, p. 656.

1788, £51,223.[1] In 1789, the deficit was about £107,000, but was reduced to £73,989, by the casual receipt of £34,000 arising from the sale of New Geneva to Lord Waterford.[2] In 1790, the deficit was £117,192.[3] In 1791, £48,585.[4] In 1792, £50,075.[5] In 1793, £274,997.[6] And in 1794, it was £731,205.[7] It is not necessary to proceed further, as from this year the annual deficit continued to increase enormously.

The sole conception of national prosperity entertained by Irish politicians was an increase of exports. If external trade was thriving, then all was well. Instead of regarding foreign commerce as but a single item in the prosperity of their country, they looked upon it as all that was necessary. The acquisition of their independence, of freedom of trade, and the opening of the British colonies to them had effected but little in this respect. We have seen the miserable condition of Irish trade and manufactures in 1784; and as late as 1788, the Chancellor of the Exchequer lamented that the country was making no progress. "Gentlemen," said that officer, "have been anxious to find out what this secret principle is which checks all our efforts; which, notwithstanding our bounties and premiums, keeps us still behind, and which, notwithstanding the emancipation of our trade, hangs as a weight upon us, dragging us down, and repressing the energy of our exertions."[1] But the extraordinary expansion of British commerce, after the general peace of 1783, carried the trade of Ireland with it, and her exports soon began to rise. One instance will illustrate the effect of British bounties and British credit on Irish exports, and the advantage to Ireland derived from her participation in the growing commerce of Great Britain. The average expense of freight, commission, wharfage, and other incidents attending the import of Irish linen into British ports in order to its export from thence, was 5½ per cent,[2] yet in 1789, three million and a half yards of Irish linen were exported from Great Britain, and in 1799 the export rose to nearly seven million and a half.[3] The Chancellor of the Exchequer, who in 1788 had bewailed the stagnant condition of Irish trade, was able in 1790 to congratulate the Commons on an increase of £800,000 in their exports.[4] The growth continued up to 1799, when Ireland exported annually to Great Britain to the value of more than five and a half millions sterling,[5] while her export to the rest of the world was about half a million.[6]

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[1] Report, etc., *Commons' Journals*, xiii., Append., p. 128.

[2] Report, etc., *Ib.*, xiii., Append., p. 338. Clarendon, p. 139. *Irish Debates*, x., p. 184.

[3] Report, etc., *Commons' Journals*, xiv., Append., p. 198.

[4] Report, etc., *Ib.*, xv., Append., p. 138. As the lottery subscription in this year exceeded the prizes by £86,583 6s. 8d., the Committee of Accounts considered this excess "so soon as received" as applicable to the current expenses of the nation.

[5] Report, etc., *Ib.*, Append., p. 326. The lottery subscription exceeded the prizes in this year by £97,500.

[6] Report, etc., *Ib.*, Append., p. 509. The lottery subscription in this year exceeded the prizes by £40,500.

[7] Report, etc., *Ib.*, xvi., Append., p. 81.

But the internal state of the country was deplorable. The debates in Parliament and the new Coercion Acts reveal the true condition of the kingdom. Disorder, turbulence, and extreme poverty prevailed throughout it. At the time we are told that prosperity was rapidly advancing, the disturbances in the South had been somewhat checked by the military, and with difficulty prevented from spreading into Connaught.[1] But they had been checked only, for, in the following year, the Secretary of State declared in Parliament that Captain Right was again busy and issuing his proclamations.[2] There was hardly a corner of the kingdom that had not supplicated for military protection as the only means of safety.[3] Though the country was wretchedly poor, drunkenness was universal, and destroyed the health, the morals, and the industry of the people. The number of unlicensed houses for the sale of spirits in the kingdom was incredible. It appeared from papers, laid before a committee appointed by the Commons to consider the excessive use of ardent spirits, that nearly every seventh house in Ireland was a whisky shop, or about 90,000 in all.[4] In the county Kildare, close to Dublin, there was not "in twenty-five miles" a single licensed house, though everywhere unlicensed spirits were sold.[5] Crime kept pace with intemperance. Women were frequently taken from their families and carried off to be married against their will.[6] In 1787, a member declared in the Commons that it was unwise to scandalise the kingdom in the face of the world, by inserting in the newspapers proclamations respecting the rapes, robberies, and assassinations committed in it, and was told by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that it was necessary to describe acts "disgraceful and shocking to humanity in order to bring the perpetrators to justice".[7]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, viii., p. 276.

[2] Report of the Board of Trade, 1780, given in Lord Sheffield's *Manufactures and Trade of Ireland*, p. 80.

[3] Clarke's *Commercial and Civil State of Ireland*, Dublin, 1799.

[4] *Irish Debates*, x., p. 155.

[5] Speaker's Speech, 11th April, 1799.

[6] £511,349, of which £329,107 went to America, and to all other parts £182,242. Table annexed to Lord Auckland's Speech, 1799, published separately.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, vii., p. 212. [2] *Ib.*, viii., p. 65.

[3] *Ib.*, vii., p. 213. [4] *Ib.*, xi., p. 68. [5] *Ib.*, p. 49.

[6] "What shall we say to the daily practice of carrying away women? An honest, industrious farmer, by great care and labour, lays by four or five hundred pounds for his daughter. No sooner is this known than some ruffian in the neighbourhood assembles a gang of two or three hundred banditti, forces the farmer's house, drags the girl out, throws her across a horse, and so carries her off to the next priest, where she is compelled to marry him or suffer worse" (*Irish Debates*, vi., p. 87).

[7] *Ib.*, vii., pp. 37, 38.

The magistrates were so incapable or remiss that an Act was passed in 1787 to enable the Lord Chancellor to cancel the existing commissions of the peace, and to appoint such persons as would execute the laws honourably and for the benefit of the country.[1] The revenue was not honestly collected, though the expense of collecting it was double that in England; and the frauds on the excise were enormous. In 1786 and 1787, the Chief Commissioner of the revenue estimated the defalcations in that branch at £361,349 [2] annually.

It is idle to speak of the prosperity of a country which was removed from a civil war by the short interval of ten years, and in which the peasantry were in a state of abject misery and yet multiplying like rabbits. A long and melancholy chain of evidence testifies to the lamentable condition of the most numerous class in the kingdom. Swift wrote after a famine, but we are now speaking of the normal condition of the Irish peasant during the 18th century. In 1735, Bishop Berkeley asked "whether there be upon earth any Christian or civilised people so beggarly, wretched and destitute as the common Irish". In 1764, Bush wrote: "I never met with such scenes of misery and oppression as this country in too many parts exhibits".[3] In his survey in the south of Ireland in 1775, Dr. Campbell declared that if he had been aware, before he started on his tour, of the sights of misery which were to present themselves on the journey, he would have turned back.[4] In 1783, a member thus described the state of the peasantry in the House of Commons, "the Irishman feeds the cattle whose flesh he is debarred from tasting. As to clothes, he has scarcely any; as for habitation, he has perhaps some miserable hovel, whither an Englishman would not venture to turn his beast. Here he, with an unhappy wife and wretched offspring, must endeavour to drag out existence, half starved and half famished with cold.[1] Four years later, Fitzgibbon stated in the same place that the poor in the province of Munster lived in a more abject state of poverty than human nature could be supposed to bear, and that their miseries were intolerable.[2] In 1793, Crumpe drew the following picture of the Irish peasant: "Behold the Irish husbandman sally forth to his work barefoot and covered with rags; behold his ruinous hovel, built of mud, covered with weeds, and pervious to every shower that falls, and every pinching gale that blows. Behold him seated, after a hard day's labour, by a fire gleaned perhaps from the furze brake that overspreads his land, involved in smoke, surrounded by a naked offspring, and sharing among them his dry and scanty meal".[3] Such being the condition of the peasantry, we cannot wonder at the statement made in 1787 by Hely Hutchinson that, for twenty-seven years before the time he spoke, the kingdom had been "infested" with insurrections,[4] nor that all the restlessness and turbulence engendered by misery still existed in it.

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[1] 27 Geo. III., c. 40. "An Act for the better execution of the laws, and preservation of the Peace within counties at large."

[2] *Irish Debates*, vi., p. 254; vii., p. 119.

[3] *Hibernia Curiosa*, 1769. An Account of a Tour in Ireland in 1764.

[4] *Philosophical Survey of the South of Ireland*, p. 211.

The rejection by the Irish Parliament of a Commercial Union in 1785 had convinced many of the necessity of a Legislative Union. Great Britain had, on that occasion, offered to Ireland great and manifest commercial advantages upon the only terms she could, with justice to her own merchants, concede them; and they had been declined on the ground that they tended to subvert the independence of the Irish legislature. It thus appeared that the pride and jealousy of independence defeated a measure of infinite public utility, and prevented Ireland from accepting a full participation in the commerce of Great Britain. An impediment to the prosperity of their country, arising from the separation of their Parliament from that of Great Britain, must have operated powerfully in turning the minds of thoughtful men to the consideration of a Union. This tendency was greatly strengthened by what occurred four years later, when a vast majority of the Lords and Commons, under the influence of selfish interest and party zeal, did not hesitate to endanger the connection between the two countries, and to violate their own fundamental laws which secured it. Advantage was taken of the temporary illness of the King to assert Irish independence in a manner hazardous to the unity of the Empire, and to differ ostentatiously from the Parliament of Great Britain on a question which the Irish Parliament was precluded by Irish law from entertaining. This conduct alarmed all those who placed their security in British connection, and dreaded disputes between the two countries. They were well aware that the occasions for differences between the two Parliaments were as numerous as the subject matters of legislation which affected the interests of both kingdoms. By slow degrees the opinion grew that a Legislative Union was the only means of drying up for ever the sources of international dissensions which might lead to separation. The evil of such differences was admitted by the Anti-Unionists in 1799. In this year a bill was introduced by them to prevent the possibility of a dispute on the same question, which we are now about to consider. As the bill provided for a single case only, it was dropped as inadequate. By dropping it, its proposers confessed that no mere change in the law could remove the dangers inseparable from the existence of two independent legislatures in the same Empire.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, iii., p. 127.

[2] *Ib.*, vii., p. 59.

[3] *Means of Providing Employment for the People*, p. 225.

[4] *Irish Debates*, vii., p. 195.

On the 20th of November, 1788, the illness and incapacity of the King were announced in both Houses of the Imperial Parliament. In an early stage of the debate on the provision to be made for supplying the defect in the exercise of the Executive, Fox advanced the opinion that the Prince of Wales had as clear a right to assume and exercise the powers of sovereignty during the King's illness as if the throne were vacant by death.[1] Pitt, on the other hand, declared that the Prince, being a subject, had no greater right than any other individual in the kingdom, and that it was subversive of the Constitution to say that the Prince might seat himself on the throne during the lifetime of his father. Pitt's opinion was adopted, and it was resolved that it was the right of the Lords and Commons to provide the means of supplying the defect in the personal exercise of the royal authority in such manner as the exigency of the case might require. It was admitted on all hands that the present case differed from that of 1688, and that the Revolution did not furnish a precedent.[2] At that time the throne was vacant, now it was full, and the incapacity of the King might be temporary only. As the King was still on the throne, the Houses were careful not to dethrone him by giving the fulness of royal authority to another during his illness, and therefore determined to appoint an assistant to the King, and to confer on that assistant an office of trust under the Crown. They also desired that, when the King should be restored to health, he should not find a solid and permanent interest, created during his incapacity, to embarrass him on his resumption of his royal authority. To secure the first of these objects, they resolved to invest the person empowered by them to supply the defect in the Executive, not with full royal powers, but with such only as were necessary to carry on the government of the country. The second was effected by withholding from the person to be appointed the power of conferring peerages and filling the Upper House with creatures of his own: by preventing him from anticipating the King's authority by reversions, or fettering it by grants of offices and pensions for life; and by restraining him from disposing of the King's real or personal property. Though the Houses rejected the idea of a title *de jure* on the Prince, and declared that it was their right alone to provide for the defect in the exercise of the Executive, they considered that the Prince had the best claim to the administration during his father's illness. Accordingly, on the 27th of January 1789, a committee was appointed to wait on the Prince with the resolutions of the Lords and Commons, and to express to him a hope that he would accept "the weighty and important trust proposed to be invested in his Royal Highness as soon as an Act of Parliament should have been passed for carrying the said resolutions into effect[1]". The Houses put aside the idea that they could confer a regency on the Prince by address, on the grounds, that the word regency was unknown to the law, and that the office had no existence until the Act which created it had been passed. On the 31st of the same month, the Prince formally intimated his intention of accepting the trust subject to the conditions imposed by the Houses. A bill "to provide for the care of his Majesty's royal person, and for the administration of the royal authority during the continuance of his Majesty's illness[1]" passed the Commons and was sent up to the Lords; but all further proceedings were put an end to by a notification to both Houses of the King's convalescence on the 19th of February.

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[1] *Parliamentary History*, xxvii., p. 706. He qualified this broad statement by saying that the Houses had the right to pronounce when the Prince ought to take possession and exercise his right.

[2] Thus Fox said: "The present situation of affairs had been compared to the Revolution, but, in fact, it was no way similar. The throne had then been declared vacant, and the rest of the Constitution remained. Now the throne was declared full, but its authority was suspended" (*Ib.*, p. 765).

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[1] *Parliamentary History*, p. 1,100.

The situation in Ireland at this juncture was wholly different from that in Great Britain. No inconvenience was felt in that country from the defect in the Executive, for the authority of the Lord Lieutenant was sufficient. The incapacity of the King did not attach upon his Lieutenant's commission so as to vitiate any of the powers conveyed by it. These powers were so extensive that the executive government of the country might have been carried on as usual, save with respect to a very few appointments excepted from his commission, and to grants for life.[2] The authority of the Lord Lieutenant was complete in all cases where the King's sign manual was not required.[3] Though he could not summon a new Parliament without the "particular directions" of the King, he was empowered by his patent and the instructions accompanying it, to prorogue, adjourn and dissolve an existing Parliament.[4] In fact, at the time the Irish Parliament met, the Lord Lieutenant had carried on the executive government from the 20th of November in the preceding year, and had, since that date, both prorogued the Parliament, and again convened it. The continuation of his powers was never doubted. There was therefore no reason for the indecent haste with which both Houses of that Parliament approached a most momentous question. In addition to this consideration, they were bound by their own laws and the Constitution of Ireland to await the decision of the Imperial Parliament in all cases affecting the royal authority. Nevertheless an immense majority in both Houses, eager to recommend themselves to the new administration expected to be appointed by the Prince, and to retain their patronage and offices, violated their own laws which secured the connection of the two countries, and imperilled the single tie between them, namely, the identity of the Executive.

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[1] *Parliamentary History*, p. 1,258.

[2] The Marquis of Buckingham to Grenville, *Dropmore MSS.*, i., p. 369.

[3] "The authority of the Lord-Lieutenant was complete in all cases where the King's sign manual was not necessary," per Fitzgibbon (*Irish Debates*, ix., 10).

[4] Buckingham to Grenville, *Dropmore MSS.*, i., p. 392.

By the Constitution and statutes of Ireland, her Crown, with all powers and prerogatives appertaining to it, was inseparably annexed to that of England. An Irish statute in the time of Henry VIII. enacted that the Kings of England should be always Kings of Ireland[1]; that is, that the Executive should be the same in both countries. This statute was never questioned in the Irish Parliament, and was confirmed by a subsequent one which declared that the kingdom of Ireland, and all styles, titles, majesty, prerogatives, etc., pertaining to the same, were justly depending upon, belonging, and for ever united to the Crown of England.[2] The effect of these statutes was that the King of England was *ipso facto* King of Ireland, no matter in what way he had obtained the English Crown. Accordingly, the English Acts altering the succession have not been re-enacted in Ireland, for, when the English Parliament disposed of the English Crown, they likewise disposed of the Irish Crown. Thus, when William III. was acknowledged as King of England, the Irish Parliament by their Act of Recognition admitted that the Crown of Ireland followed the grant of that of England, and that the title of the English sovereign to be King of Ireland did not require the sanction of an Irish Act. Later the same course was followed. The title of the House of Brunswick was a creation of the English Parliament exclusively, and when the first of that line ascended the throne of Great Britain, the Irish Parliament did "recognise and acknowledge that the kingdom of Ireland and all titles, styles, royalties jurisdiction, rights, privileges, prerogatives and preheminences royal thereto belonging, are most rightfully and lawfully vested in his Majesty, King George.[1] These statutes demonstrate that the Irish Executive, being a prerogative of the Irish Crown, was with that Crown for ever annexed to the English Crown, and was therefore withdrawn from the power or consideration of the Irish Parliament. Or in other words, as the Crown of Ireland, being by their own laws united and annexed to that of England, was beyond their reach, so also were all the prerogatives and rights appendant to it, and among these was the exercise of the Irish Executive.

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[1] 33 Hen. VIII., c. 1.

[2] 4 Will. and Mary, c. 1.

If any doubt as to the identity of the Executive in both countries remained, it was dispelled by an Irish Act which had been passed only seven years before, and which alone was adequate to convince the Irish Houses that they could not, consistently with their own laws, take a step in the matter, but were bound to await the decision of the British Parliament. An Act of 1782 provided that no Parliament should be called in Ireland without a license under the Great Seal of Britain, and that no Irish bill should become law unless returned from England under the same Seal.[2] This Act confirmed the identity of the Executive in both kingdoms, for it vested the power of summoning a Parliament and of giving effect to Irish legislation in the person who was in possession of the Great Seal of Britain. As long as this law existed, an Executive appointed by the Irish Parliament could not summon a Parliament, and would be obliged to refer all Irish bills to the Executive appointed by the British Parliament. This position was declared to be unquestionable by the leader of the anti-Unionists in 1799. "It is clear," said the Speaker of the Commons, "notwithstanding what passed in 1789, that the Act annexing the Crown of Henry VIII. extends to the person authorised by Britain to administer regal power, whether King, Queen or Regent. At the Revolution, the British Parliament altered the succession to the Crown, and, when the event took place, the successor became our sovereign through their Act under ours of Henry VIII; and so would a Regent, invested by them with royal authority, become ours without any Act on our part. Our law of 1782 concerning the Great Seal puts it out of doubt; whoever is Regent of Britain has that Great Seal; the functions of the Irish legislature must cease without its use, and, therefore, the Regent of Britain alone can represent the third estate of the Irish legislature."[1] The duty of the Irish Houses was to do nothing, but to await the decision of those of Great Britain, and then to pass an Act of Recognition.[2]

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[1] 2 Geo. I., c. 2.

[2] 21 and 22 Geo. III. c. 47. Known as Yelverton's Act.

Grattan was in England while the debates which the King's illness had given rise to were going on in the Imperial Parliament. During his stay there he had many interviews with the Prince of Wales, Fox, Lord Loughborough, and with Lord Spencer and Mr. Pelham, who were to be sent to Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant and Chief

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[1] Speech of the Speaker, 11th April, 1799.

[2] A remark of Mr. Lecky shows that he knew nothing of this matter. He says: "The real question at issue was, whether under the peculiar circumstances of the constitution of Ireland and the connection of the two Crowns, the proper mode of investing the Prince of Wales with the Regency was by address or by Bill" (vi., p. 421).

Secretary in case of the unconditional appointment of the Prince. Some kind of agreement was entered into between this party and Grattan,[1] and the latter returned to Ireland pledged to support the Prince's claim to take his father's place independent of Parliament or Parliamentary restrictions.[2]

At the same time a Ring of borough owners was formed to oppose the existing Government and to support the Opposition in England. These men, who regarded their country as a milch cow, believed that a change of Ministry was near, and desired to derive from it some advantage for themselves. Among these several held lucrative and confidential situations under the Crown. The Duke of Leinster was Master of the Rolls; Lord Shannon one of the Vice-Treasurers; Lord Loftus was Postmaster-General; and the two Ponsonbys were in possession of high and well-paid offices. The strength of the Ring was very great, and its chiefs commanded the services of a majority in the Commons. The Duke of Leinster disposed of five members, Lord Shannon of fourteen, the Ponsonbys of sixteen, Lord Granard and Mr. Conolly of four each, and Mr. O'Neill of three—forty-six in all, or ninety-two votes on a division.[3] Some of them were discontented with their present situations. One of the Ponsonbys had been lately refused a request. He had asked for the union of two offices in his favour.[4] Lord Shannon desired a larger amount of patronage than he already possessed. He limited his wishes to "the nomination of one bishop, one judge, and one commissioner of the Revenue, besides office for himself, inferior offices for his dependants, and the whole patronage of the county and city of Cork."[5] Lord Loftus had lately received the Post Office, and had made the most explicit promises of support to Lord Buckingham.[1] But future, not past, favours were the springs of his action, and he also joined the Ring. All these, together with their followers, and a few independent members in the Commons, supported the views of Grattan.

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[1] *Grattan's Life*, iii., p. 337.

[2] *Ib.*, iii., p. 367.

[3] Marquis of Buckingham to Grenville, *Dropmore MSS.*, i., p. 466.

[4] Same to same, *Ib.*, p. 395.

[5] Same to same, *Ib.*, p. 421.

The Parliament met on the 5th of February, 1789, and the King's malady was announced in the Speech from the Throne. On the following day the Chief Secretary presented to the Commons the documents relating to the King's illness,[2] and then moved that an interval of ten days—that is to the 16th—should be allowed for consideration. Grattan moved an amendment, namely, that the House should sit on the 11th, and the amendment was carried by 128 to 74. When the Commons met on the 11th, Parsons, one of the members for the University, adjured them by the duty they owed their King, and by the necessity of preserving the connection of the countries unimpaired, to give the subject due consideration. The Chief Secretary told them that he expected further documents relating to the King's illness, and Fitzgibbon asked for "some decent space of time for deliberation".[3] But Grattan, who had already assumed the tone and manners of a Minister, would not hear of delay, and at once moved "that the personal exercise of the royal authority was by his Majesty's indisposition for the present interrupted". Mr. Conolly then moved "that an humble address be presented to his Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, humbly to request his Royal Highness to take upon himself the government of this realm during the continuance of his

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[1] Marquis of Buckingham to Grenville, *Dropmore MSS.*, i., p. 402.

[2] These are to be found in the *Commons' Journals*, xiii., Append., pp. 8-45.

[3] *Irish Debates*, ix., pp. 33-35.

Majesty's present indisposition and no longer, and under the Stile and Title of Prince Regent of Ireland, in the name of his Majesty, to exercise and administer, according to the laws and constitution of this kingdom, all regal powers, jurisdiction, and prerogatives to the Crown and Government thereof belonging". Both motions passed without a division, and on the same day a committee was appointed to draw up the address. On the following day the address was reported, voted and ordered to be sent up to the Lords.[1]

Thus, within six days from the time this matter had come before them, the Commons, without evidence as to the present health of the King—for the latest report of his condition was dated the 13th of the preceding month—without examining a single precedent, and in direct violation of Irish law, decided the most important constitutional question that could engage their attention. The truth was, the majority were thinking of their own interests and of the rewards they might expect from the new administration. That the Prince might be the better able to compensate their services, they desired that he should be appointed without restrictions, and therefore invested him with all regal powers and prerogatives.

The more this address is considered, the greater will its folly appear. An address of the two Houses could not deprive the meanest subject of his property, yet this address purported to strip the King of his authority while he was still King of England and therefore King of Ireland, and to transfer it to a subject. The King's powers and prerogatives had been given him by law, and nothing but an Act of Parliament could affect them. The address conferred on the Prince the whole of the royal authority in Ireland, although he had consented to accept such portion only of it as the Lords and Commons of Great Britain considered necessary. It destroyed therefore the unity of the Executive, which consisted as much in the sameness of the powers exercised as in the identity of the person exercising them. As it gave greater powers to the Prince in Ireland than he was to possess in Britain, so it might have given less, and reduced the Executive to a shadow. In the face of Irish statutes declaring that the kingdom of Ireland for ever depended upon and belonged to the English Crown, this address gave superior powers to the subordinate Executive, and affected to bestow on the Prince that which could only accrue to him from his appointment in Great Britain.

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[1] *Commons' Journals*, xiii., pp. 12, 13.

But behind these absurdities there lurked the gravest dangers to the connection between the two countries. If the Irish Houses possessed the right of choosing a Regent, as they claimed, the principle of separation was established, for they might have chosen any one without regard to a nomination in Great Britain. If this address had any validity, then a separation was actually effected, and the only tie between the kingdoms—the identity of the Executive—broken, there being an Executive in Ireland and none in Great Britain. By investing the Prince with the power of giving the royal assent to Irish Bills at a time when he was not entrusted with the Great Seal of Britain, they repealed all their own statutes annexing the Irish Crown and all its prerogatives to that of England, and also their late Act which made the Seal of Great Britain necessary to Irish legislation.

The Lords concurred with the Commons in the address, and on the 19th both Houses waited on the Lord Lieutenant, and requested him to transmit it to the Prince. To this request, Lord Buckingham answered, that he did not consider himself warranted by his oath of office to lay before the Prince an address purporting to invest him with powers to take upon him the government of Ireland before he should be enabled by law to do so.

On the following day, as the Viceroy had declined to transmit the address, Grattan moved that a competent number of members should be chosen to present the address to the Prince, and on his nomination four were named, who, with two deputed by the Lords, were to proceed to London and present the address to the Prince.[1] After which, Grattan proposed two resolutions which were carried. The first was that, in addressing the Prince of Wales to take on him the government of the country, the Lords and Commons had exercised an undoubted right and discharged an indispensable duty to which they only were competent. The second was a condemnation of the Lord Lieutenant's conduct; that his answer was ill-advised, that it contained an unconstitutional censure on the proceedings of both Houses, and attempted to question their undoubted rights and privileges. Two destructive amendments to the latter were moved by Fitzgibbon and Mr. Burgh, and were defeated by diminishing majorities. This was owing to a bulletin of the King's convalescence which Lord Buckingham had sent to the Commons late at night.[2]

The members of the Ring were alarmed by the news of the King's improvement, and, urged by the fear of losing their offices, they took a step which exhibited them in their true light—that of a self-seeking faction. They entered into an association, and, in a Round Robin, signed by twenty members of the Upper House and thirty-seven Commoners, mutually pledged themselves to oppose any administration that should deprive a subscriber of place or pension for his conduct on the Regency question. It is hard to qualify this proceeding as it deserves. Lords and Commoners enjoying high and confidential positions under the Crown, many of them Privy Councillors, combined to establish an *imperium in imperio*, and to render all independent government impossible. But the members of the association were as faithless to each other as they were selfish. Though they were supported by the Prince of Wales and the Opposition in England, and urged by them to adhere to their Round Robin,[1] they were false to their compact. The smaller men deserted first and made their peace with Lord Buckingham, and their example spread. Charles Sheridan[2] and one of the Ponsonbys claimed the protection of the others in vain. The latter called a meeting of the subscribers to enforce his claim. Of the inferior members, only Lord Donoughmore and Mr. Cuffe attended, and they went with the object of quarrelling with Ponsonby. Lord Loftus left town to avoid going; Lord Clifden had become a warm supporter of the Government: and Lord Shannon declared at the meeting that the Round Robin was at an end.[3]

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[1] The Duke of Leinster and Lord Charlemont represented the Lords. The delegates of the Commons were Mr. Conolly, the Right Hon. John O'Neill, the Right Hon. William B. Ponsonby and Mr. Stewart.

[2] Buckingham to Grenville, *Dropmore MSS.*, i., p. 417.

Before the cabal was quite broken up, Grattan induced his supporters to make a last rally. The supplies had been voted in the Committee of Supplies, which was a committee of the whole House, for the usual time, that is for one year ending the 26th of March 1790, and the Mutiny Bill had also been agreed to up to the 1st of April in the same year.

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[1] Buckingham to Grenville, *Dropmore MSS.*, i., pp. 434, 440.

[2] Though Sheridan was dismissed, Lord Buckingham took pity on his wife, six children, and two penniless sisters. An arrangement was made by which a pension was secured to him. Sheridan stated that he had been seduced by his brother's promises and his prospects from the Prince (*Ib.*, 440, 441).

[3] *Ib.*, 441.

When these resolutions were reported to the House on the 25th of February, Grattan moved that the supplies should be granted for two months only, and that the Mutiny Bill should be limited to the same period.[1] Both motions passed. The estimates for the year had been fully stated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and no objection to any article had been made as long as Grattan expected to be the Minister of the new Government. Only three weeks before, when his hopes were high, he had declared that he had not "the most distant idea of impeding the ordinary supplies[2]". At first, when the inexpedience of his motion was pointed out in the House, he excused himself on the ground "that not having sufficient time to examine the accounts, it would be improper for the House to grant a long money bill".[3] But a little later he acknowledged the true reason. He thought the Lord Lieutenant would prorogue the Parliament if the supplies were granted for the usual time, and said "it was wise to prevent him carrying a measure of revenge into execution."[4]

Two days later, that is, on the 27th, the delegates, who had carried the address to London, presented it to the Prince. It was a proper ending to the factious game that had been played. Eight days after the recovery of the King had been notified to both Houses of the Imperial Parliament,[5] the Irish delegates gravely presented to the Prince their address requesting him to take upon himself the government of Ireland during the King's illness.

Mr. Lecky concludes his account of a crisis which he did not understand by stating that "corruption of the most wholesale description was again resorted to. Seven peers were created, nine others were promoted; several baronets were made: £13,000 a year more was expended in pensions, and a crowd of new and often sinecure places were created.[1]" This paragraph deserves attention as an example of the way in which Irish History has been written. If it were true that sixteen peers had been created or promoted for services on this occasion, the number would not have been too great. Twenty-six members of the Upper House and seventy-four in the Lower had steadily supported the Government on a most momentous question, and against the most powerful cabal which had ever existed in Ireland. All the subscribers to the Round Robin ought to have been dismissed for their attempt to overawe the Government, and their places and pensions given to others, whereas only some were so treated, and the rank and file allowed to make their peace. In any other country the whole body would have been punished; unfortunately this course was not possible in Ireland, where the members of the Round Robin, patronised by the heir to the Crown, and supported by the Opposition in England, might have prevented the business of the country from being carried on. But the statement is groundless. The number of peers promoted or created for their services on this occasion was five. The Earls of Tyrone and Hillsborough were advanced to marquisates; and Messrs. Alexander and Pery were created barons, together with Fitzgibbon, whose merits were beyond praise or reward. The others were created or promoted because they held promises made to them on former occasions by the Duke of Rutland or by the King.[2] It is equally untrue that £13,000 was expended in pensions to reward the supporters of the Government. It is highly probable that not a penny was expended in this manner. In 1790, when Lord Buckingham had left Ireland, three Parliamentary papers were drawn up by the Committee of Accounts. One was a statement of the pensions, amounting to £7,891 5s., which had ceased during Lord Buckingham's administration. The second was a list of all pensions placed on the Civil Establishment during the same period.[1] Their total amount was £13,040. Of this sum £4,000 a year was granted to the Duke of Gloucester, and £1,700 to Mr. Orde, Chief Secretary to the Duke of Rutland in the late administration; £1,400 was given before the King's illness;[2] £1,200 in continuation of pensions which had ceased; of the remainder, £2,040 was given to ladies. The third paper was an account of the pensions, three in number, placed on the Military Establishment by Lord Buckingham.[3] Their total amount was £1,323 5s. Of this sum £1,000 was granted to the dismissed Secretary of War, Charles Sheridan; £50 to George Ridsdale; and £273 15s. to Lawrence Parsons. Suspicion may point to this last pension; but Lawrence Parsons, afterwards second Earl of Rosse, was one of the most independent men in Ireland, not to speak of the smallness of the pension when contrasted with the one granted through pity to a political opponent. The truth about the new offices was this: Lord Buckingham had discovered a most scandalous scene of fraud in the Ordnance Office. Large sums of money had been made away with, 1,500 barrels of powder had disappeared, and innumerable other frauds on a smaller scale had been committed.[4] He was, therefore, obliged to dismiss some officers and to replace them with others. This took place in August, 1788, before the King's illness. Later on in the same year, and also before the King's illness, he had determined to separate the Boards of Stamps and Accounts, "most unaccountably joined," as he considered, and to establish a distinct Board of Stamps.[1] When we remember that in the year 1789 the Irish stamp duties were collected at an expense of 18 per cent.[2] we cannot but bless the amending hand.

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[1] *Commons' Journals*, xiii., pp. 22, 23; *Irish Debates*, ix., pp. 179, 185.

[2] This was on the 7th of February (*Irish Debates*, ix., p. 29).

[3] *Ib.*, ix., p. 180.

[4] *Ib.*, p. 195. It is instructive to read Mr. Lecky's version of this abuse of the power of the Commons: "In order to secure that Parliament should be sitting during the continuation of the case, the chief supplies were only granted for two months" (vi., p. 428).

[5] 19th February. *Parliamentary History*, xxvii., p. 1,293.

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[1] Volume vi., p. 429.

[2] Lord Buckingham to Grenville, *Dropmore MSS.*, i., pp. 426, 430, 436.

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[1] *Commons' Journals*, xiii., Append., pp. 271, 273.

[2] For the time of granting these pensions, see the general lists of pensions for the years 1789 and 1790 (*Ib.*, Append., pp. 102, 176.

[3] *Ib.*, Append., p. 270.

[4] Lord Buckingham to Grenville, *Dropmore MSS.*, i., pp. 352, 358. See also *Irish Debates*, x., p. 232, and xi., p. 99, for details as to the system of peculation.

Dismissal from a lucrative situation under the Crown in Ireland altered at once the convictions of the discarded official. George Ponsonby had declared in 1783, when a plan of reform was brought forward, that he was ready to support the existing Constitution of Ireland, under which he enjoyed every blessing, with his life and fortune.[3] In the present year he had pledged himself to prove "that nothing could be more injurious to the country than a bill to restrain pensions".[4] From this time we find him and his brother William, who had also been dismissed, in the front ranks of the Opposition, advocating a Pension Bill and supporting every project of reform even when proposed on the eve of the rebellion.

After their defeat, the principal members of the Opposition in both Houses, as the Duke of Leinster, Lord Charlemont, Grattan, the two Ponsonbys, etc., formed themselves into a society to which they gave the name of the Whig Club. As the club was intended to be a political body, they issued a declaration of the principles which were to be binding on the members. In this document they accused the Government of a settled plan to subvert the liberties of Ireland; confirmed their adhesion to the views and doctrines expressed by them in Parliament on the Regency question; and renewed their censure on the Lord Lieutenant. They declared that they would maintain "the sacred rights of the people," though they avowed their chief object to be the defence of the constitution of 1782, which excluded three-fourths of the people.[1] On the suggestion of Lord Charlemont,[2] a similar club, under the name of the Northern Whig Club, was founded in Belfast, which soon outdid its parent. At its first meeting, a declaration was drawn up, the spirit of which may be judged from the first two paragraphs. (1) "That Government is an original contract between the governors and governed, instituted for the good of the whole community." (2) "That in a limited monarchy, or more properly speaking [respect being had to the constitution of these realms] a Regal Commonwealth, the MAJESTY is in the PEOPLE; and, though the person on the throne is superior to any individual, he is but the servant of the nation."[3] An incident connected with this declaration is worth mentioning as showing how the separatist feeling was growing in Belfast. The declaration was drafted by Mr. Haliday, a physician in the town, and he had inserted in the draft these words: "We will maintain as sacred and inviolate our connection with Great Britain in its present form as indispensably necessary for the freedom of this kingdom in particular, and for the freedom, strength and prosperity of the empire in general". When the draft was submitted to the committee, this sentence was thrown out.[4]

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[1] Lord Buckingham to Grenville, *Dropmore MSS.*, i., p. 359.

[2] Clarendon, *Revenue and Finances of Ireland*, p. 147. Sir Henry Cavendish, in his *Statement of the Public Accounts of Ireland*, gives this matter thus: Gross produce of the Stamp Duty in 1789, £58,606 11s. 1½d.; management, £11,211 14s. 5d.; net produce, £47,394 16s. 8½d.

[3] *Irish Debates*, ii., p. 235.

[4] *Ib.*, ix., p. 18.

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[1] See the Declaration in *Grattan's Life*, iii., p. 434.

[2] *Manuscripts of Lord Charlemont*, ii., p. 110.

[3] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 335.

[4] Haliday to Charlemont, *Manuscripts of Lord Charlemont*, ii., pp. 115, 117.

On the 16th April, 1790, this club issued an Address to the Electors of Ireland, the first article of which announced the dissolution of Parliament in the following words: "The third estate of Parliament no longer exists; the power of regenerating it reverts to you; and never was a wise, a faithful, a spirited use of that power more loudly called for. The corrupt support given in the late session by placed and pensioned majorities, without pretence to argument, decency or ability, to an administration equally destitute of them all, in measures avowedly hostile to the rights, liberties and prosperity of this country—proclaims your danger, points out your defence, and challenges your best exertions."[1] The Dublin club was not behind the Northern in its endeavour to destroy all authority in Ireland. In April, 1791, it nominated a committee for the purpose of disseminating Paine's *Rights of Man* throughout the country.[2]

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 339.

[2] *Charlemont MSS.*, ii., p. 137.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEMAND FOR A DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENT IN THE NORTH—THE WHIG CLUB IN BELFAST—RISE OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN—THEIR CONDUCT IN THE NORTH—THEIR PROCEEDINGS IN DUBLIN.

Before entering upon an account of the last ten years of the Episcopalian Parliament, it may be well to examine some words and phrases which have been, and are, used quite too loosely.

The first is the word *Irish.* When we are speaking not of one but of three communities in Ireland, it is hard to see how this term can be applied to anything save to the natural features of the country, or to inanimate objects peculiar to it. To include under one general term three peoples wholly different in character, principles and habits only leads to infinite confusion of thought. There was no bond whatever between these three except that they dwelt on the same island, and peace between them was maintained only by the power of Great Britain. In nearly every case the word *Irish* should be excluded, and the expression *in Ireland* substituted for it. Thus, for the sake of convenience, we constantly speak of the Irish Parliament; but it is manifestly absurd to call a Parliament Irish which at different periods represented only a fourth, an eighth, or a tenth of the inhabitants of the country. Once, indeed for a short time, there did exist a real Irish Parliament in which the three communities were fully represented. But the rebellion of the Roman Catholics in 1641 put an end to that National Legislature, and practically excluded their descendants from all subsequent parliaments. The expressions Irish Nation and Irish People must also go, as well as the term Nationality, a feeling which could have no place in Ireland. Mr. Lecky tells us "In Ireland . . . the Independence of the Parliament was supported by the strong pride and passion of Nationality,"[1] while in other pages of the same work he impresses on us the general contempt that was felt for that Assembly[2]. The truth is, that no such feeling as nationality could arise among three discordant peoples, and no affection was felt for an exclusive Parliament which had failed to govern the country, except by the Episcopalians themselves. This latter statement is proved by the fact that no opposition was given to the Legislative Union by the Presbyterians or Roman Catholics. The only opposition to that measure came from about a half of the Episcopalians, that is a half of one-tenth of the inhabitants of Ireland, and even this opposition was largely diminished when the terms of the Union became known.[3]

The existing state of every country being the inevitable result of the circumstances and conditions which preceded it, it is necessary, in order to understand the feuds and dissensions which manifested themselves in Ireland after the acquisition of independence, to revert to the commencement of the eighteenth century. At that period, the situation in Ireland was very peculiar. The three communities which occupied it differed in their religion, their political aims, and their traditions. Of these, one, the Episcopalian, was enabled, by the favour and protection of England, to possess itself of the legislature, the revenue, the army, the magistracy, the corporations, and the whole patronage of the kingdom. The other two were depressed and subjected to restrictions. The Presbyterians were excluded from all public employments, civil and military, from the magistracy, and from municipal office in the corporate towns. Though they were nominally eligible to Parliament, their exclusion from public employment and from office in the cities, towns and boroughs which returned representatives, barred their entrance in any considerable proportion into that Assembly. The Roman Catholics were bound hand and foot by the Penal laws and reduced to complete political insignificance. They were not only deprived of the franchise, and of the right to purchase land or even accept profitable leases, but they were denied the uncontrolled power of bequeathing or inheriting property.

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[1] Vol. viii., p. 278.

[2] See his remarks on this subject, vi., p. 463; vii., pp. 145, 330.

[3] The number of inhabitants in Ireland in 1800 was about five millions. The Episcopalians were half a million at the most. In the first of the Union debates the Government had a majority of one, so closely were the parties balanced.

Such a condition of affairs, from whatever causes it arose, was exceptional, unfavourable to the prosperity of the country, and productive of constant irritation and discontent in the two aggrieved communities. It could not last and was essentially temporary. It was not to be expected that the Presbyterians and Roman Catholics would long remain submissive under their disabilities or bear patiently the ascendency of their fellow citizens. It was certain that at the first sign of weakness in the position of the dominant class, each, or perhaps both of the discontented communities together, would struggle to raise themselves to the level of the Episcopalians and put into practice their own political ideas. Indeed the history of the last seventeen years of the Episcopalian Parliament is a history of its resistance to the demands of the two other communities. The members of that Parliament were well aware that to grant the claims of these bodies in their entirety meant their own extinction: for the numbers of the Roman Catholics alone were so great that their admission into Parliament would soon have given them an immense preponderance in that Assembly. Harassed by the long struggle, alarmed by the universal disaffection, and foreseeing perpetual agitation in the future, the majority of the Episcopalian Parliament resolved to seek peace and security in an incorporating union.

From the first, the only hope of the Episcopalians long retaining their privileged position lay in their complete union and identification with the Power which protected them. Their policy and that of their Parliament should have been to cultivate the affection and confidence of the superior nation to which they were appendant, and to cement the connection between the two Parliaments as closely as possible. For this purpose, they ought to have refrained from all rivalry with the Imperial Parliament and recognised their own subordinate position in the Empire. Their inability to defend themselves, and the presence of domestic enemies far more numerous than they, should have admonished them to administer the kingdom entrusted to them in concert with the mother country, and to give her a commanding influence in its government. But their conduct was the very reverse of this policy. No sooner were they, at the time of the Revolution, rescued from ruin by the blood and treasures of England than they repudiated the authority of her Parliament over them, claimed equality for their local legislature, and finally, after a period of sullen and reluctant submission, extorted from her their independence at a time when she was contending against the civilised world. This was the first intimation to their enemies that they stood alone and relied on their own strength, and it was immediately taken advantage of. Within the year after the passing of the Act by which Great Britain renounced all authority over Ireland, the Episcopalian Parliament had to fight for its life. The volunteers set up an armed Parliament of their own under the name of the Grand National Convention to overawe the Dublin Assembly and to dictate the constitution of all future Parliaments. Even after this attack on the Parliament of the Episcopalians, an opportunity was opened to them of making a close and intimate alliance with Great Britain. They were offered a free and full partnership in her commerce. If this offer had been accepted, their position would have been greatly strengthened; an unrestricted Channel trade and the prosperity resulting therefrom might have reconciled the Presbyterians to their Parliament, and the Legislative Union might have been long delayed. But, infatuated by the pride and jealousy of an unreal independence, they rejected an offer which would have given them security. Four years later, under the guidance of the flashy rhetorician who had induced them to reject a commercial treaty, they accentuated their difference from the Parliament of Great Britain by claiming to regulate the royal authority and by hazarding the connection and interests of the two kingdoms.

In the inevitable struggle, it was natural that the Presbyterians should be the first to move. They were a valiant, narrow, and independent race of Republican principles and opposed to episcopacy and aristocracy. On many former occasions they had shown of what stuff they were made. In 1641, they had united for a short time with the Roman Catholics, but the union was dissolved by the Rebellion and its attendant massacres. Throughout the whole civil war which followed, they kept their quarters free from the rebels. In 1649, the Presbytery of Belfast published a protestation against the execution of the king and the "universal toleration of all religions" by the Independents,[1] a proceeding which drew down on them the testy censure of

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 28.

John Milton. In 1689, the majority of the defenders of Derry were Presbyterians. During the American War they had sympathised strongly with the colonists in their struggle. Though their body had been admitted to public office and employment in 1780, they felt no gratitude for the tardy reparation. They knew well that this had been done not from a sense of justice, but because they formed the backbone of the Ulster regiments which constituted the strength of the volunteers, and because the Parliament required their assistance in its struggle for independence. To the House of Commons they were implacably hostile for various reasons. It had wronged them in the past; it was influenced by a class they abhorred: and it did not fulfil their ideas of what such an Assembly should be. They desired universal suffrage, annual elections, and a democratic House consisting not of representatives but of delegates bound to obey the instructions of their constituents: or, as it was expressed in the second of the Dungannon resolutions in 1783, "representatives freely choosen, subject to the control, and frequently returning into the common mass of constituents". Owing to their numbers in the Ulster volunteers, they succeeded in diffusing their political sentiments among the corps in that province, and through them among the whole body. The results of this propaganda were the meeting of the delegates from 272 corps of the Ulster volunteers at Dungannon and the establishment of a Military National Convention in Dublin, which claimed an authority in no way inferior to that of the existing legislature. If this attempt had not been resisted, their convention would have visited, modified, or altered every department of the State. The Commons felt that their existence was threatened. Standing on the firm ground of the Constitution, they rejected a military reform and declared their fixed determination to maintain their just rights against all encroachments. Their courage saved them and the convention was dissolved.

Far from being discouraged by the failure of the volunteer convention, the Presbyterians immediately resumed their agitation for reform. On the 5th of January, 1784, at a very numerous meeting of the freeholders of the county Antrim, a petition to the House of Commons in favour of a radical reform of Parliament was adopted, and instructions were given to the representatives of the county to support the plan of reform which had been agreed to in the convention.[1] The resolutions passed and the petition prepared at the county meeting were adopted by the Belfast troop of volunteers, who offered to support with their lives and fortunes the freeholders in the promotion of parliamentary reform, and recommended the volunteers of Ireland "to improve their discipline and increase their numbers".[2] A fews days later the inhabitants of Belfast drew up a petition of their own, and also adopted the county petition, which prayed the Commons to reconsider the plan of reform which had been approved in the National Convention. At the same time they published an address to the volunteers, in which they protested against the rejection of the Convention's plan, and solemnly besought them "to increase in numbers and to improve in discipline, for the interests of your country urgently demand it".[3] In March of the same year, delegates of thirty-one corps of volunteers met in Belfast to settle the time and place for the review of that year. At this meeting it was unanimously resolved not to associate with any corps under the command of officers who had signed a petition to Parliament in opposition to the sense of the people on the subject of a more equal representation.[4]

About this time, *viz.*, 1784, the Presbyterians, believing that without the assistance of the Roman Catholics they could not obtain the reform they desired, began to enlist that body in the contest, and to agitate for the extension of the suffrage to them. The volunteers of Belfast and its neighbourhood led the way in this new policy. They invited into their ranks persons of all religious persuasions, and opened their drills for the instruction of all who came.[1] In July, 1784, after a review of fifty-one corps, horse and foot, the volunteers presented an address to Lord Charlemont deploring "the disunion which, by limiting the right of suffrage and circumscribing the number of Irish citizens, has in a high degree tended to create and foster that aristocratic tyranny which is the fountain of every Irish grievance, and against which the public now unanimously exclaim ".[2] In the same month the inhabitants of Belfast, at a public meeting, passed a resolution that the gradual extension of the suffrage to the Roman Catholics would be a measure fraught with the happiest consequences; and also adopted a most absurd and seditious petition to the King. This petition prayed his Majesty "to dissolve a Parliament which, by reiterated Acts, hath completely lost the confidence of his subjects; and further, as a measure founded on such dissolution . . . to give efficacy to the determinations of the civil convention of actual delegates of the Collective Body, to sit in Dublin on the 25th October next,[3] either by issuing writs agreeably to such plan of reform as shall by them be deemed adequate, or by co-operating with them in other steps for renovating the Constitution, for overturning oppressions that, under the semblance of law, extinguish the spirit of our free Constitution, whilst they merely suffer its external forms to remain ".[4] One copy of this petition was sent to the Duke of Rutland for transmission to England, but was returned with strong expressions of disapprobation; another was sent to Pitt, who refused to present it.[1] Notwithstanding these rebuffs, the freeholders of the county Antrim and the inhabitants of Belfast persisted in electing delegates to the congress. The sheriff of the county having refused to convene a meeting for this purpose, a very large number of freeholders, on the public requisition of 872 of their body, assembled and elected five delegates. At this meeting another petition to the King was adopted, praying him "to avert the common danger either by recommending to Parliament the immediate adoption of measures for radically improving the representation of your Commons, or by such other interposition of the powers vested in the Crown as may best restore confidence in the legislature and revive the essential principles of free government in your empire". [2] The town of Belfast also elected five delegates to the congress, of whom the Bishop of Derry was one. As has been said before, the congress met and was a complete failure.

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 271.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 272. [3] *Ib.*, p. 277. [4] *Ib.*, p. 290.

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collections*, pp., 293-4.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 307.

[3] Napper Tandy's *National Congress.*

[4] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 311.

It is to be observed that all this emotional agitation took place some years before the French Revolution, the effects of which in Ireland have been greatly exaggerated. The men who attended these meetings and clamoured for a radical reform of Parliament had no grievance or oppression to complain of, nor did they ever specify any injustice done them or distress felt by them. Yet among them the rebellion of 1798 took its rise. The county of Antrim and the town of Belfast were the most flourishing places in the kingdom, their wealth was great and was rapidly increasing.[3] What these prosperous and discontented citizens wanted was a democratic House of Commons under their control, that by means of it they might attack episcopacy and aristocracy, and, not being able to obtain their desire, they spoke of themselves as being in a state of slavery. The letters of Dr. Drennan,[1] the son of a Presbyterian clergyman, which were published in 1784 under the name of Orellana, explain the political views of his co-religionists. These letters were addressed to his "fellow-slaves". They asserted that the interests of the nation were subject to the absolute will of men, elected by and dependent on a selfish aristocracy; that the people were not free, as they were taxed by these men: and that the government of Ireland was not a limited monarchy, but an oligarchy. To remedy this state of affairs the author called upon the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, and the Roman Catholics to embrace each other in the spirit of Christianity and to unite in a sacred compact in the cause of their sinking country.[2]

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collections*, pp. 313-317. [2] *Ib.*, pp. 318-323.

[3] In 1787, the Duke of Rutland made a tour in the north of Ireland. He thus speaks of Belfast: "Belfast is a giant of a town, flourishing in

After the failure of Napper Tandy's National Congress there was a lull in Belfast until the establishment of the Northern Whig Club in the early part of 1790. At this time the French Revolution had not attracted much attention. This club, like its fellow in Dublin, was a centre of sedition. We have already mentioned the political creed which every member signed before his admission; the second article of which was "that in a limited monarchy, or more

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everything. Five hundred houses have been built in a very short space of time—I think within a year. Their trade is immense. They go to the West Indies, and to almost every quarter of the globe. A single ship paid this year £10,000 King's duty. The revenue collected from this port amounts annually to £120,000. It holds about 16,000 inhabitants. It is full of Presbyterians, and was much connected with the Americans during the calamitous contest" (*MSS. of the Duke of Rutland*, iii., p. 420).

[1] Dr. Drennan was an intimate friend of Wolfe Tone, and a member of a small political club established by Tone in Dublin during the winter of 1790.

[2] These letters are to be found in *Belfast Politics*, published in 1818.

properly speaking, respect being had to the Constitution of these realms, a Regal Commonwealth, the Majesty is in the People: and though the person on the throne is superior to any individual, he is but the servant of the nation". Shortly after its formation, the Parliament was dissolved and a new one summoned for the 20th of May. To influence the elections, the club issued an address to the electors of Ireland, denouncing the administration and the conduct of the late Parliament in the strongest terms.[1] They also printed and circulated at their own expense a pamphlet made up of extracts from a *Review of the last Session* written by Wolfe Tone.[2] By adopting as their own the principles and precepts of a man whose objects were, as he tells us, to subvert the Government and to break the connection with England, the club manifested that, at this time, there was no great diversity between their political views and those of Tone. Yet we find that Lord Charlemont, Lord Moira, Lord de Clifford, Robert Stewart, afterwards Lord Castlereagh, and John O'Neill, afterwards Lord O'Neill, were members of the club.

During the year 1790, the French were principally engaged in constitution making; and their movements excited but little interest in the North. But early in 1791 the mob of Paris had prevented the King from going to Saint Cloud, and Louis was virtually imprisoned in his palace.[3] On the 15th of June, the Whig Club resolved to meet on the 14th of July in order to celebrate the French Revolution. The suggestion was taken up by the volunteers and the inhabitants of the town, and on the appointed day Belfast saw a larger assemblage than had ever before been collected in it.[1] The festival commenced with a procession in which volunteers, horse, foot and artillery led the way. They were immediately followed by a triumphal car on which a great standard, supported by two volunteers, was erected. One side of the standard represented the liberation of prisoners from the Bastille. The reverse "contained a large figure of Hibernia in a reclining posture, one hand and foot in shackles, a volunteer presenting to her a figure of Liberty, supported by an artilleryman resting on a piece of ordnance. Motto: 'For a people to be free, it is sufficient that they will it'". The Whig Club and a very large number of citizens, wearing a green cockade and formed in pairs, closed the procession. The whole body marched through the principal streets, and on its arrival at the Linen Hall three salvos were fired by the battalion companies of volunteers which were answered from the seven guns of the artillery. The citizens and volunteers then entered the great square, and "forming a widely extended circle" unanimously agreed to a Declaration of their sentiments on the French Revolution, which was to be transmitted to the National Assembly. After which volunteers and citizens to the number of 354 dined together, while the club closed the day with a banquet in their own house. At the public dinner in the Linen Hall one of the toasts was "an abolition of the Popery laws, and an extension of privileges to Roman Catholics". The club at their banquet made no mention of the Roman Catholics, but among other toasts drank "Thomas Paine and the Rights of Man" and "the Majesty of the People".[2]

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[1] The address is given in *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 339.

[2] Haliday to Charlemont, *MSS., etc., of Lord Charlemont*, ii., p. 125. The pamphlet, as published by the Club, is to be found in Tone's *Life* i., p. 299, American edition. Future references will be made to this edition.

[3] 18th April.

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 349.

[2] *Ib.*, pp. 341-357, where the proceedings and Declarations are given. The National Assembly does not appear to have answered, but replies were received from Nantes and Bordeaux.

While the Whig clubs were fostering discontent and playing at treason without endangering their necks or their properties, another body was preparing to carry out their teaching to its natural results. There was about this time in Belfast a secret committee of Presbyterians, which managed the affairs and directed the efforts of the most advanced political party in the town. Wolfe Tone was known to this committee, not personally, but as the author of a pamphlet, "An argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," which was published in August, 1791. In this pamphlet, Tone contended that the people had a right to reform the legislature; that there was no National Government in Ireland; that the administration was the enemy of law and a gang of "ringleaders of sedition placed in authority"; that, to resist the influence of a foreign Government which ruled the country, union among all its inhabitants was necessary, and that therefore the Roman Catholics should be admitted to the electoral franchise and to Parliament.[1] The Belfast men were delighted to see their own doctrines ably set forth, and "printed a very large edition which they dispersed through the whole north of Ireland."[2] Tone was invited to Belfast by the secret committee, and on the 14th of October he and his friend Russell, who was afterwards hanged for high treason, were admitted into it and made their declaration of secrecy.[3] We do not know exactly what share Tone took in the transformation of the committee;[4] all that can be said with certainty is that the committee became a club, and that at Tone's suggestion it took the name of the Society of United Irishmen. The first regular meeting of the club was held on the 18th of October, 1791, and its declaration and resolutions written by Tone were adopted. Communications were also opened with the Roman Catholic Committee, and with Napper Tandy as representative of the Dublin democrats.[1] Immediately after its formation, the society set up a paper called the *Northern Star*, in order, as Tone tells us "to give a fair statement of all that passed in France, whither every one turned their eyes; to inculcate the necessity of union among Irishmen of all religious persuasions: to support the emancipation of the Catholics; and finally, as the necessary though not avowed consequence of all this, to erect Ireland into a republic independent of England.[2] The editor of the paper was Neilson, and it obtained at once a large circulation, all the leading Roman Catholics throughout Ireland becoming subscribers.[3] The first number appeared on the 4th of January, 1792, or within three months after the establishment of the society.[4] The number of branches of the parent society increased with remarkable rapidity in Belfast; in January, 1792, there were four at least, in 1797 there were eighty.[5]

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[1] This pamphlet is to be found at the end of the first volume of Tone's *Life*.

[2] Tone's *Life*, i., p. 53.

[3] *Ib.*, p. 142.

[4] Tone himself merely says that he was invited to Belfast to assist in framing the first club of United Irishmen (*Life*, i., p. 53). Madden contradicts himself. In one volume he says that the Society was founded by Tone, in another that Neilson was the originator of the Society, and that Tone was the organiser and penman. Compare vol. i., p. 222, and vol. ii., p. 11.

After a stay of three weeks in Belfast, Tone and Russell returned to Dublin with instructions to cultivate the Protestant agitators and to form a club in that city. This was easy, for Dr. Drennan, afterwards one of the chairmen of the Dublin Society, had smoothed the way for them by publishing in the preceding June the earliest prospectus of an Irish Union. This document, closely printed on a quarto sheet, of which it occupied nearly three pages and a half, had been distributed in the form of a circular letter with indefatigable assiduity.[1] With the aid of Napper Tandy a Society was established in Dublin, which on the 9th of November 1791 issued its first manifesto, asserting that the nation was in a state of abject slavery, and that there was no hope for it but "in the sincere and *hearty union of all the people* for a complete and radical reform of Parliament, because it is obvious that *one party alone* have been ever unable to obtain a single blessing for their country." The manifesto adopted the declaration and resolutions of the Belfast Society, and was signed by Napper Tandy.[2] Tone says that the Roman Catholics flocked into the Dublin Society "in crowds".[3]

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[1] Tone's *Life*, i., p. 145.
[2] *Ib.*, i., p. 67.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 68.
[4] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 361.
[5] Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons, 1797.

It has been asserted that the Society of United Irishmen "was at first constituted for the simple purpose of forming a political union of Protestants and Catholics, and thus obtaining a liberal measure of parliamentary reform".[4] There never was a greater mistake. All the evidence shows that from the first the aim of the Society was to separate Ireland from Great Britain, and to establish a democratic republic. Tone acknowledges in his *Memoirs* that the design of the first Belfast Society was "to erect Ireland into a republic independent of England".[5] Oliver Bond, one of the earliest and most active members of the Dublin Society, deposed on oath that "Catholic Emancipation was a mere pretence".[6] But the best proofs are found in the original publications and declarations of the leaders both in Belfast and Dublin. A few extracts will enable us to determine whether their views were limited to reform and Roman Catholic Emancipation, or whether their primary designs were not treasonable.

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[1] *Political Letters of Alexander Knox*, p. 139. The letter is attached to the Report of the Commons' Secret Report, 1798.

[2] Proceedings of the Society of United Irishmen of Dublin, 1794. The italics given above are in the original.

[3] *Life*, i., p. 58.

[4] Lecky, vi., p. 466.

[5] *Life*, i., p. 68. Dr. MacNeven swore that the reform the United Irishmen desired from the first was "a democratic House of Commons". Report from the Lords' Secret Committee, 1798. Append.

[6] Examination of Oliver Bond, 14th August, 1798. Seventh appendix to the Report of the Secret Committee of the Lords in that year.

At the time when the first intimation of an Irish Union was given by Drennan's circular letter, there was nothing to prevent political discussion or meetings of citizens to communicate their opinions. The war had not commenced, and there was no Convention Act, no Insurrection or Treasonable Correspondence Act. Yet the writer of the letter recommended that the Society he proposed should be a secret brotherhood. "Secrecy is expedient and necessary; it will make the bond of union more cohesive, and the spirit of this union more ardent and more condensed; it will envelop this dense flame with a cloud of gloomy ambiguity, that will not only facilitate its own agency, but will at the same time confound and terrify its enemies by their ignorance of the design, the extent, the direction, or the consequences. It will throw a veil over those individuals whose professional prudence might make them wish to be concealed until a manifestation of themselves became absolutely necessary. . . . For this Society is not to rest satisfied in drawing speculative plans of reform and improvement, but to be practically busied about the *means* of accomplishment. Were the hand of Locke to hold from Heaven a scheme of government most perfectly adapted to the nature and capabilities of the Irish Nation, it would drop to the ground a mere sounding scroll, were there no other means of giving it effect than its intrinsic excellence. All true Irishmen agree in *what* ought to be done, but how to get it done is the question. This Society is likely to be a means, the most powerful, for the promotion of a great end—what end? THE RIGHTS OF MEN IN

IRELAND, the greatest happiness of the greatest number in *this island*, the inherent and indefeasible claims of every free nation, to rest in this nation the *will* and the *power* to be happy, to pursue the Common Weal as an individual pursues his private welfare, and to stand in insulated independence an imperatorial people".

The writer then states a number of propositions in the form of questions, each presuming that the preceding one has been answered as the proposer would wish. "What are the *means* of procuring such a reform in the Constitution as may secure to the people their rights most effectually and most speedily? What is the plan of reform most suited to this country? Can the renovation in the Constitution, which we all deem necessary, be accomplished in the *ways* of the Constitution? 'The evil,' says Junius, 'lies too deep to be cured by any remedy less than some great convulsion,' which may bring back the Constitution to its original principles, or utterly destroy it. Is this opinion still truer when applied to *this* country, or is it false? Who are the people? Can the right of changing the Constitution rest anywhere but in the original constitutive power—the people? Can the will of the people be known but by full and fair convention, to be constituted on the plan which will come recommended on the most popular authority?[1] Is the independence of Ireland nominal or real, a barren right or a fact regulative of national conduct, and influencing national character? Has it had any other effect than raising the value of a house, and making it more self-sufficient at the expense of the people? Is there any middle state between the extremes of union with England and total separation, in which the rights of the people can be fully established and rest in security? What is the form of government that will secure to us our rights with the least expense and the greatest benefit? By the BROTHERHOOD are these questions, and such as these, to be determined. On this determination are they to form the chart of their constitution, which with honour and good faith they are to subscribe, and which is to regulate their course."[1]

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[1] Here two questions as to Roman Catholics are omitted.

This is strange language in the mouth of men seeking reform—more revolutionary was never heard. It is in reality a denunciation of the connection with Great Britain and of their own Parliament. The expression, "the rights of men in Ireland to stand in insulated independence an imperatorial people" can only mean the right to separate. The secret brotherhood was to be all-powerful and the Parliament nothing. They were to decide what kind of reform was necessary: whether that reform was to be effected by constitutional ways or by some great convulsion which might restore the Constitution to its original principles or utterly destroy it; whether separation from Great Britain was essential to the establishment of the rights of the people; and finally what form of government should be set up. Though this letter declared that the will of the people could only be known by a full and fair convention, yet, as the brotherhood themselves were to decide all important questions, the convention would be a mere instrument in their hands. It is not surprising that the brotherhood desired a gloomy and impenetrable secrecy, and proposed to "throw a veil over those individuals whose professional prudence might make them wish to be concealed until a manifestation of themselves became absolutely necessary."

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[1] Drennan's Circular Letter in full, for, like all the prose writings of Dr. Drennan, it is very long winded, is given in the Appendix to the Report from the Secret Committee of the Commons, 1797.

If we now examine the declaration and resolutions drawn up in the original Belfast Society, and adopted as their own by the branches in that town and by the Dublin Society, we shall find not one word of reform, as an end, but merely as a means of opposing the power of Great Britain. "WE HAVE NO NATIONAL GOVERNMENT," they say; "we are ruled by Englishmen and the servants of Englishmen, whose object is the interest of another country, whose instrument is corruption, and whose strength is the weakness of Ireland; and these men have the whole of the power and patronage of the country, as means to seduce and to subdue the honesty and the spirit of her representatives in the legislature. Such an extrinsic power, acting with uniform force in a direction too frequently opposite to the true line of our obvious interests, can be resisted with effect solely by *unanimity, decision and spirit in the people*, qualities which may be exerted most legally, constitutionally and efficaciously by that great measure essential to the prosperity and freedom of Ireland —AN EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT. . . . Impressed with these sentiments, we have agreed to form an association to be called THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN; and we do pledge ourselves to our country, and mutually to each other, that we shall steadily support, and endeavour by all due means to carry into effect, the following resolutions:—

"That the weight of English influence in the government of this country is so great as to require a cordial union among *all the people of Ireland* to maintain that balance which is essential to the preservation of our liberties and the extension of our commerce.

"That the sole constitutional mode by which this influence can be opposed is by a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in Parliament.

"That no reform is practicable, efficacious, or just, which shall not include *Irishmen* of every religious persuasion.

"We have gone to what we conceive to be the root of the evil; we have stated what we conceive to be the remedy. With a parliament thus reformed, everything is easy; without it nothing can be done. And we do call on and most earnestly exhort our countrymen in general to follow our example, and to form similar societies in every quarter of the kingdom," etc.[1]

Here is a clear refutation of the statement that "the Society of United Irishmen was at first constituted for the simple purpose of forming a political union of Protestants and Catholics, and thus obtaining a liberal measure of parliamentary reform". They themselves tell us that they wanted a National Government, and that reform and Roman Catholic emancipation were sought solely for the purpose of resisting what they call "an extrinsic power". The object confessedly aimed at was to abolish the power of Great Britain in Ireland, and this was to be accomplished by a mob-elected Parliament. That the United Irishmen desired such a Parliament is beyond doubt, for we have the scheme of reform which they themselves proposed,[2] the essential features of which were annual elections and universal suffrage, and that too in a country in which upwards of 2,000,000 of the inhabitants were in the following year "excused on account of poverty from paying a tax of about fourpence each".[3] Even Grattan denounced this scheme as "a complete, avowed, and unqualified departure from the vital and fundamental article of the British Constitution in practice and in theory ". " It is not merely," he continues, " to those who have neither farm, freehold, nor trade, that this plan extends the right of voting. It gives the return of members to serve in Parliament to all the common soldiers, to the resident army, horse, foot, and dragoons ; to the police, to the scavenger. It goes farther ; it gives that right to all hospitals, to alms-men, to Channel Row, and every beggarman in the kingdom of Ireland. It goes farther ; it gives that right to every criminal, Whiteboys that break laws, and Defenders who steal arms ; and would thus present you with a representation of felons as well as of paupers. To such a monstrous constitution, whose frenzy, folly and wickedness must excite at once your scorn and horror, the objection is not merely," etc., etc.[1]

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[1] This declaration is to be found in Tone's *Life*, i., p. 367, and in *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 358.

[2] Plan of Reform and Address to the People thereon, *Proceedings of the United Irishmen*, pp. 124-130.

[3] *Irish Debates*, xv., p. 278. Grattan made the number excused from payment of hearth money "more than half of our inhabitants" (*Ib.*, xiv., p. 80).

If further evidence be required as to the original aims of the United Irishmen, it is forthcoming. About the time when Drennan published his circular prospectus, that is in June, 1791, Tone addressed a letter to a friend in Belfast in which he wrote : "I have not said one word that looks like a wish for separation ; though I give it to you and your friends as my most decided opinion that such an event would be a regeneration to this country ".[2] But the proceedings of the body put it beyond doubt. As early as 1792, they attempted to seduce the soldiery ; summoned the volunteers, as citizen soldiers, to resume their arms ; and made overtures through Napper Tandy to the Defenders to join them.

There is not the slightest reason to believe, as has been stated,[3] that, if the plan of reform brought forward by William Ponsonby and Grattan in 1797 had been adopted, the United Irishmen would have desisted from their designs. In a memoir delivered to the Government after the rebellion by Thomas A. Emmet, A. O'Connor and MacNeven, it is stated that, if this plan had been acceded to, they would have declined to hold any further intercourse with the French except to tell them that the difference between the Government and the people had been adjusted, and that they need not attempt a second invasion.[1] To strengthen this statement, they add: "in fact, no attempt or advance was made to renew the negotiations till April, 1797, when an agent was sent". The assertions or palliations of trapped and self-convicted traitors, who had laboured for many years to stir up a civil war and to let loose, anarchy, pillage and murder, deserve neither attention nor credit, except against themselves. But as the Committee of the Lords says, "the palpable falsehood of the assertion appears by the *Journals* of the House of Commons; for these persons have all confessed that their resident agent was despatched by them to Paris in April, 1797, with instructions to negotiate a treaty with the Directory of France; and the proposition for parliamentary reform, to the rejection of which they pretend to ascribe the mission of Lewins, was not made till the 15th of May, 1797."[2] There is other evidence to prove that no parliamentary reform would have satisfied the United Irishmen except their own, without which, as their original declaration asserted, "nothing could be done." In the winter of 1794, the test of the society was changed into an oath of secrecy, and the expression "representation of the Irish people in Parliament" was altered into "a representation of all the people," leaving out the word Parliament. MacNeven deposed on oath that this was done "to reconcile reformers and Republicans, and because they had given up all idea of reform, and were determined on Republicanism".[1] The United Irishmen spurned the scheme of reform introduced by the Ponsonbys and Grattan in 1793, but not debated till 1794.[2] Three months later they denounced Grattan for scoffing at their plans, although he was, as they said, "the purchased property of the people," and, with him, the whole Opposition.[3] Time effected no change in their sentiments. On the 19th of February, 1798, the Leinster Provincial Committee passed a resolution, "that they would not be diverted from their purpose by anything which could be done in Parliament, as nothing short of the total emancipation of their country would satisfy them." This resolution was agreed to by the Ulster Provincial Committee, and was communicated to the Executive Directory, which wielded supreme authority over the whole body.[4]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xiv., pp. 80, 81.

[2] This letter is annexed to the Secret Report of the Commons, 1797.

[3] Lecky, vii., p. 321.

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[1] *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 189.

[2] This Report of the 30th August, 1798, with its Appendices, was printed as a separate pamphlet, and is to be found in the Haliday collection in the Royal Irish Academy.

It is remarkable that, though the United Irishmen professed to be peculiarly the friends of the people, they never suggested a measure for increasing their happiness, relieving their distress, or promoting their improvement. They had nothing to offer them but barren declamation and political speculation. In their eyes, the poor and needy were not men to be helped and instructed; they were mere instruments of agitation. The education of the labouring classes, their social condition, and their poverty only drew from the United Society such heartless trash as the following: "*To you, the poorer classes of the community,* we now address ourselves. We are told you are ignorant; we wish you to enjoy Liberty, without which no People was ever enlightened. We are told you are uneducated and immoral; we wish you to be educated and your morality improved by the most rapid of all instructors—a good Government. Do you find yourselves sunk in poverty and wretchedness? Are you overloaded with burdens you are but little able to bear? Do you feel many grievances which it would be tedious, and might be *unsafe*, to mention? Believe us, they can all be redressed by such a reform as will give *you* your just proportion of influence in the Legislature, AND BY SUCH A MEASURE ONLY." [1]

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[1] Examination of MacNeven, attached to the Reports of both Houses in 1798.

[2] *Proceedings of the United Irishmen*, p. 127.

[3] Address to the People of Ireland, *Ib.*, p. 196.

[4] Examination of MacNeven.

No words can adequately describe or enumerate the misfortunes brought upon the kingdom by these murderous mountebanks, who were endeavouring to kindle a civil war that they might put their political theories into practice. From the time their system first commenced, they despatched emissaries to every part of the kingdom for the purpose of extending their views and affiliating new branches.[2] At first, they were cautious of alarming persons not sufficiently ripe for the adoption of their views, and endeavoured to prepare the public mind by the circulation of the most seditious publications, particularly the works of Thomas Paine. To allay the apprehensions of the loyal or the prudent, they pretended that the object of their association was the attainment of Parliamentary Reform and Roman Catholic emancipation. But they soon discovered that the mass of the people did not care "a feather"[3] for either or for both combined. Finding these pretexts ineffectual, they changed their tactics. By handbills and seditious papers, disseminated so industriously as to find their way into every village, they incessantly inculcated on the multitude that they were an oppressed people; that their misery arose from a radically bad Government, that their happiness depended on an alteration of that Government; and that as those in power were not disposed to comply with the popular wish, the people ought to form themselves into a revolutionary and irresistible mass, acting in concert and moving as one body. No efforts were untried or artifice omitted by the United Irishmen to carry out their projects. They taught the people to believe that the Society would bring about the abolition of tithes and a distribution of property, inasmuch as they would become members of a democracy which would govern the country. They took advantage of the religious feuds in the country and turned them to their purposes by representing to the Roman Catholics, that for their own protection it was necessary to become members of the United Society, as their Protestant fellow-subjects had entered into a solemn league and covenant to exterminate them. To strengthen belief in these statements, they fabricated and distributed through the provinces of Leinster, Munster and Connaught, false tests and oaths of the Orangemen's Associations. They endeavoured to destroy all veneration for existing establishments and to dissolve the regular order of the community. "The leaders of the system," says the last report of the Commons' Committee, "in order to adapt the minds of the multitude to the purposes of their treason . . . left no means unemployed which the most malignant subtlety could suggest for eradicating from amongst the working-classes every sentiment both of private and public duty. All quiet and peaceable habits, all social as well as moral obligations, it has been their object to destroy; and the more sacred the tie, the more industriously have they laboured to destroy it. They have incited the soldier to betray his King; they have armed the tenant against the landlord; and they have taught the servant to conspire with the assassin of his master; blasting the repose and confidence of private life even in its sanctuary, effacing every law of truth, of justice, of gratitude, and of religion, except where it has been possible to make even religion itself the perverted instrument of their execrable views."

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[1] The Italics and Capitals are in the original, which is a part of an Address to the People of Ireland (*Proceedings of the United Irishmen*, p. 129).

[2] Evidence of Samuel Neilson.

[3] Evidence of Thomas Addis Emmet.

As early as 1792, attempts were made to seduce the soldiery from their allegiance. Printed papers were industriously circulated amongst the privates and non-commissioned officers; urging them to insubordination and revolt, and holding out the most tempting offers of preferment to such as should desert their colours. To deter the well affected from joining the yeomanry corps and to render the administration of justice altogether ineffectual, the most active system of terror was put in operation. Persons enrolled in the yeomanry, magistrates, witnesses, jurors, every class and description of people who ventured to support the laws, became objects of a cruel persecution in their persons, property or trade. The United Irishmen raised considerable sums of money among themselves for the purpose of defending such of their associates as were brought to trial; they had itinerant committees which went on circuit as regularly as the judges, and a bar of lawyers retained to undertake the cause of all persons committed for state offences. Entries of money appear in their proceedings as paid to procure or buy off witnesses; in many cases to gaolers for being guilty of breaches of trust, and even to under-sheriffs for returning partial panels; handbills were circulated by them to intimidate jurors, and every endeavour was made in the courts to exclude from the jury persons unconnected with their party. About 1795, or earlier, the United Irishmen combined with a body of Roman Catholic banditti who called themselves Defenders, and became indistinguishable from them.[1] After this combination had been effected, the life of no loyal subject was safe for twenty-four hours unless he had a military guard in his house. "In the latter end of 1796 and beginning of 1797," says the same Report, "the loyal inhabitants of Ulster suffered most severely from the depredations of the United Irishmen. Throughout the Province, they were stripped of their arms; the most horrid murders were perpetrated by large bodies of men in open day; and it became nearly impossible to bring the offenders to justice, from the inevitable destruction that awaited the witnesses or jurors who dared to perform their duty."[2] Whilst Ulster was thus harried by the United Irishmen, the Defenders were committing the most horrible outrages in the counties of Roscommon, Leitrim, Longford, Meath, Westmeath and Kildare.

The accounts, given in the reports of the Secret Committees, of the condition of Ulster in 1796 and 1797, were amply corroborated by statements in Parliament. In March of the latter year, the Opposition, or as they were then called the "Seven Wise Men," started a debate on "the policy of disarming Ulster" and "General Lake's proclamation". During the debate one member declared "there was scarcely a day which did not furnish news of daring outrages of Northern traitors—outrages that endangered the very existence of the Constitution".[1] Another, "that the loyal people of the North were exposed to assassination if they uttered their sentiments".[2] Another, "that the law in the province of Ulster could not be executed".[3] Another, "that such was the audacity of the United Irishmen in the neighbourhood of Derry that Lord Cavan who commanded there was obliged to order the garrison men to deposit their arms every night in the Court House, to prevent them from being taken by force. Above 400 families had been robbed of their arms in that neighbourhood in one night."[4] The Attorney-General said "In the counties of Donegal and Antrim, where the magistrates had done their duties, they have been assassinated or forced to fly; the peaceable and loyal inhabitants through Ulster were deprived of their arms, or so terrified that they were obliged to give them up. In all these parts there were many loyal and well-affected people, but, if they uttered their sentiments, they were assassinated: and lest they should use their arms in defence of the country, they were deprived of them."[5]

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[1] Madden, *United Irishmen*, i., p. 115. Napper Tandy, when Secretary of the Dublin United Society, became a member of the "Defenders' Association," and took their oath. This took place in 1792. Tandy's object was to induce the Defenders to combine with the United Irishmen. He fled the country in the following year.

[2] Report of the Commons, 1798. There were five Reports in all. One, of the House of Lords, in 1793; two from both Houses in 1797; and two from both Houses in 1798. They were made Secret in order to conceal the names of the witnesses and of persons accused, and to prevent anything transpiring which might prejudice future juries.

The secret committee of the House of Lords in 1797, which reported after an investigation by evidence, contained a very startling assertion, namely, that it had been decided by the United Irishmen, in the event of their success, to massacre all those who might be deemed inimical to their conspiracy, and that the first list of the proscribed had been calculated "by one of their leaders" at thirty thousand persons. This statement becomes the more remarkable when we read the sworn evidence of two of the foremost United Irishmen. On the 7th of August,

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvii., p. 140.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 141.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 146.
[4] *Ib.*, pp. 141, 164.
[5] *Ib.*, p. 148.

1798, Dr. MacNeven was asked: "Were the reports of the secret committees of the two Houses of Parliament last year accurate?" His answer was "I believe they were accurate, save that they under-stated the number of men and arms". On the fourteenth of the same month, to a similar question Oliver Bond replied, "I think they were."[1]

The date of the rebellion is generally given as 1798, but if preparations for it, and numerous local insurrections be taken into account, it must be placed much earlier. In the prosperous North, where the Roman Catholics seemed disposed to remain quiet, the progress of the United Irishmen was very rapid. Within twelve months from the establishment of the original Society, they had turned the counties of Antrim and Down, and the towns of Belfast and Newry, into the head quarters of a dangerous and widely spread conspiracy. The disorders and disturbances, which prevailed in several parts of the kingdom as early as the end of 1792 and beginning of 1793, attracted the attention of the House of Lords, and a secret committee was appointed to inquire into their causes, to discover their promoters, and to prevent their extension. The committee examined witnesses on oath, and on the 7th of March, 1793, made their report. The first part of the report referred to the Defenders, who throughout the counties of Louth, Cavan, Meath and Monaghan, were plundering the houses of the Protestants of arms and "of every thing they could find". The latter part described the state of the North: "An unusual ferment has for some months past disturbed several parts of the North, particularly the town of Belfast and the county of Antrim; it is kept up and encouraged by seditious papers and pamphlets of the most dangerous tendency, printed at very cheap and inconsiderate rates in Dublin and Belfast, which issue almost daily from certain societies of men or clubs in both those places, calling themselves committees under various descriptions, and carrying on a constant correspondence with each other. These publications are circulated amongst the people with the utmost industry, and appear to be calculated to defame the Government and Parliament, and to render the people dissatisfied with their condition and with the laws. The conduct of the French is shamefully extolled, and recommended to the public view as an example for imitation; hopes and expectations have been held up of their assistance by a descent upon this kingdom, and prayers have been offered up at Belfast from the pulpit for the success of their arms in the presence of military associations which have been newly levied and arranged in that town."[1] "Several bodies of men have been collected in different parts of the North, armed and disciplined under officers chosen by themselves, and composed mostly of the lowest classes of the people. These bodies are daily increasing in numbers and force; they have exerted their best endeavours to procure military men of experience to act as their officers, some of them having expressly stated that there were men enough to be had, but that officers were what they wanted. Stands of arms and gunpowder to a very large amount, much above the common consumption, have been sent within these few months to Belfast and Newry, and orders given for a much greater quantity, which it appears could be wanted only for military operations. At Belfast, bodies of men in arms are drilled and exercised for several hours almost every night by candle light, and attempts have been made to seduce the soldiery, which, much to the honour of the King's forces, have proved ineffectual. The declared object of these military bodies is to procure a reform of Parliament, but the obvious intention of most of them appears to be to overawe the Parliament and the Government, and to dictate to both ".

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[1] Report of the secret committee of the Lords, 1798, Append., pp. 3 and 7. This report was published separately and is to be found in the Haliday Collection of Pamphlets.

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[1] Four dissenting ministers of the town of Belfast denied this charge in a letter to the Lord Chancellor. The fifth, Sinclair Kelburn, published the following declaration: "Since the French declaration of war against Great Britain and Ireland was known here, I did not pray for the 'success of their arms'. I do not recollect that I ever used the words. I am certain that I never prayed for success to the French arms before any military association" (*Belfast Politics*, p. 408). This gentleman was an original member of the Society of United Irishmen.

In Dublin the proceedings of the United Irishmen were exceedingly bold, violent and seditious. No sooner had they formed themselves into a Society,[1] than they denied the authority of the House of Commons to secure freedom of debate within its walls. In February, 1792, Napper Tandy committed a gross breach of the privilege of Parliament by sending a challenge to the Solicitor-General for words spoken in the House. He was ordered into custody by the Commons, and a messenger was sent to his residence to arrest him, but Tandy made his escape through a window. At the request of the Commons the Lord-Lieutenant issued a proclamation offering a reward for the apprehension of Tandy.[2] The Society immediately published resolutions to the following effect: that the power assumed by the House of Commons was not warranted by law; that the proclamation was not warranted by law; that the liberty of the subject was violated in the person of Tandy; and that his cause was that of the public and must receive a judicial decision. A committee of secrecy was then appointed by the Society to carry the last-mentioned resolution into effect, and was empowered to draw on the treasurer for the necessary sums.[1] On the 14th December, 1792, they issued an incendiary address to the volunteers, calling on them to resume their arms, and to assemble in a convention of the Protestant people, and then to enter into communications with the Roman Catholic convention, so as to form a united nation.[2] For distributing this address, an information was filed against Hamilton Rowan, and he was sentenced to pay a fine of £500 and be imprisoned for two years. The Society again interfered, and, at a meeting, resolved that the paper, alleged to have been distributed by Hamilton Rowan, was "falsely called in the said information a seditious libel, and that it was the duty of every member to distribute the public resolutions of the Society, etc."[3] Later, while Rowan was in prison, the Society presented him with an address equally bombastic and seditious.[4] In January, 1793, they published an address to the Irish Nation, in which they explained fully their views, and recommended the constitution which was afterwards adopted by the Society.[5] "Trust as little to your friends as to your enemies," they said, "in a matter where you can act only by yourselves. The will of the Nation must be declared before any Reform ought to take place. It is not, therefore, any class however numerous, any society however respectable, any subaltern assembly, that have either right or competency to express that authoritative will. Nothing less than the people can speak for the people. This competency resides not in a few freeholders shivering in a corner of a country hall, but only in the whole community represented *in* each county [as at present in Antrim] by parochial delegation, and then *from* each county by baronial delegation to provincial conventions, the union of which must form the awful will of the people of Ireland. Let us, therefore, conclude by conjuring the county meetings now assembling to follow the example of Ulster, and by appointing delegates to a convention of their respective provinces, to unite their scattered and insulated wills into one momentous mass, which may have authority sufficient to make a declaration of rights on behalf of the Nation."[1] On the 10th of February, 1793, at a meeting specially convened, they denounced the war with France, as a war against principles and the liberty of Europe;[2] declared that raising the militia was intended to invest an ever-grasping administration with an enormous and alarming patronage, and to destroy the volunteers; and condemned the Gunpowder Bill, then pending in Parliament, as palpably tending to enact against the whole body of the people the rigour of the Penal Code.[3] On the 24th of the same month, they published a series of resolutions directed against the secret committee of the House of Lords, denying the right of the Lords to delegate their authority to a committee, and of the committee to examine on oath.[4] For this libel on Parliament, Simon Butler and Oliver Bond, the chairman and secretary of the meeting, were sentenced by the House of Lords to be imprisoned for six months, and to pay each a fine of £500. A full meeting of the Society was immediately called, and it was resolved to send a deputation to wait on the prisoners and congratulate them on their conduct.[1] Not content with this, they issued on the 3rd March an "Address to the People of Ireland," repeating their condemnation of the action of the Lords, and declaring that the sentence on Rowan and Bond had been pronounced by a body who were at once judges and parties.[2] In November, 1793, they published their plan of reform and an Address to the People of Ireland thereon, in which they expressed their belief that both the Administration and the Opposition were "equally averse from the measure of adequate reform".[3] On the 24th of March, 1794, they issued their last address to the people of Ireland. In this they justified their plan of universal suffrage; asserted that nothing short of "pure democracy" could maintain the integrity and independence of the House of Commons against monarchy and aristocracy; and made an attack on Grattan and the Opposition.[4] In May of this year, the sheriffs, with some officers, repaired to the Society's place of meeting, dispersed the members, and seized their papers. From this time they consulted in secret.

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[1] The officers of this Society were very unfortunate. Of its eight chairmen, three were hanged, namely, Henry Sheares, John Sheares and Begenal Harvey; two were exiled, Hamilton Rowan and Dr. James Reynolds; Simon Butler died in extreme poverty in Wales. Of its nine secretaries, Thomas Russell was hanged; Tone and Oliver Bond were convicted of high treason; Napper Tandy fled the country; four were exiled, Edward Joseph Lewines, Livingston Webb, Matthew Dowling and John Bourke.

[2] See the proceedings against Tandy, *Irish Debates*, xii., pp. 231, 306, 307.

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[1] *Proceedings of the United Irishmen of Dublin*, p. 17.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 43.

[3] *Ib.*, p. 48.

[4] *Ib.*, p. 131.

[5] *Ib.*, p. 51.

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[1] This is only an extract from the Address, which is a good example of Dr. Drennan's extremely long-winded and gloomy compositions. Drennan was prosecuted for the publication of it, but was not convicted.

[2] War was declared by the French against England on the 1st of February, 1793.

[3] *Ib.*, p. 62.

[4] *Ib.*, p. 67.

In this abstract, many of the proceedings of the Society have been omitted for want of space; such as their addresses and answers to democratic societies in England and Scotland; their resolutions respecting Hamilton Rowan, Henry Sheares, Napper Tandy, Dr. Reynolds, etc., and the replies of these individuals; and also the legal proceedings taken by Napper Tandy at the instigation and costs of the Society against the Lord-Lieutenant, Lord Fitzgibbon, the Speaker, the Attorney-General, and the printers of the proclamation for his arrest.[5]

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[1] *Proceedings of the United Irishmen of Dublin*, p. 72.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 74. [3] *Ib.*, pp. 124-130. [4] *Ib.*, p. 190.

[5] There are two editions of the proceedings of this Society. One was published in Dublin in 1794. Another in Philadelphia in 1795.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE ROMAN CATHOLICS—THEIR UNION WITH THE PRESBYTERIANS—THE DEFENDERS.

WE cannot wonder that the Roman Catholics were roused to action by the encouragement of the Northern Presbyterians and the United Irishmen; but we may well be astonished at the rapidity of their progress when once they commenced to move. For many years before 1790 that body had a kind of representative assembly sitting in Dublin for the purpose of obtaining a mitigation of the Penal Laws. This was known as the General Committee, and consisted of their bishops, lords and country gentlemen, who sat in their own right, and also of a certain number of merchants and traders resident in Dublin, but delegated by the towns corporate to represent them. So little was thought of this assembly in 1790 that its members could not induce a single member of Parliament to present a modest petition praying for nothing specific, but merely that their case should be taken into consideration.[1] In the beginning of 1791 a deputation from the General Committee waited on the Chief Secretary with a list of the Penal Laws, and entreated the Government to remove any portion which they might think fit, but without effect. Up to 1791, the management of the committee had been in the hands of their bishops, lords and country gentlemen, but in this year a strong democratic spirit appeared in the committee, chiefly amongst the merchants and traders. Two parties in it soon became defined—an aristocratic party, which was opposed to a union with the Presbyterians, and an opposition led by John Keogh, a wealthy Dublin merchant. A trial of strength between the two soon occurred. The country gentlemen, headed by Lord Kenmare, proposed in the committee that no further application for relief should be made, but that the relaxation of the Penal Laws should be left to the wisdom and liberality of the legislature. This proposal was strongly resisted by the democratic party, and was negatived by a very large majority. Thereupon Lord Kenmare, Lord Fingal and sixty-six of the landed gentlemen seceded from the committee, and published their resolution not to embarrass the Government by advancing their claims. A few months later, *viz.*, the 27th of December, 1791, they presented an address to the Lord-Lieutenant declaring their loyalty to the King and their attachment to the Constitution, disclaiming every word and act tending to disturb the tranquillity of the country, and leaving their further relief to the wisdom and discretion of the legislature. This address was censured at several public meetings of the Roman Catholics; and, on the 14th January, 1792, their General Committee published a series of resolutions attacking it with extraordinary virulence.[1] After the secession of the noblemen and gentlemen from the General Committee, that Assembly became a body wholly democratic, and was governed by five men, who were then, or afterwards became, United Irishmen, *viz.*, John Keogh, Edward

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[1] Vindication of the Catholics, published by order of the General Committee in 1793. This was drawn up by Wolfe Tone, and is to be found in his *Life*, i., p. 411.

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[1] The Address and the Resolutions of the General Committee are given in Seward's *Collectanea Hibernica*, ii., pp. 296-301.

Byrne, Richard M'Cormick, John Sweetman and Dr. MacNeven.[1]

Subsequent to the secession of the moderate party, the General Committee resolved to make an application to Parliament. To give weight to their intended petition, they invited Richard Burke, only son of Edmund Burke, over to Ireland, and appointed him their agent for conducting their parliamentary business. Burke arrived in Dublin in January, 1792. During a short stay of four months[2] he was guilty of every folly that a conceited young man, utterly deficient in judgment, sympathy and temper, could commit in that short time. He ended, as Tone tells us, his short and turbulent career by breaking with the General Committee, who, however, presented him with a sum of two thousand guineas. Shortly after Burke's departure, Tone was appointed agent and secretary to the sub-committee, which managed the affairs of the General Committee during the intervals between the meetings of the larger body. This appointment marked the permanent union of the Roman Catholic Committee with the northern agitators and the United Irishmen.

In 1791, an Act was passed in the Imperial Parliament for the relief of the English Roman Catholics, and an English Act of this nature was sure to be followed by a similar Act in Ireland. Accordingly, on the 25th January, 1792, Sir Hercules Langrishe, on behalf of the Government, moved for leave to bring in a bill for removing some of the disabilities under which the Irish Roman Catholics laboured, and his motion was seconded by the Chief Secretary. Langrishe proposed to open the Bar to Roman Catholics under the rank of King's counsel; to allow them to become attorneys and solicitors; to permit intermarriages between them and Protestants; to restore to them education unrestrained; and to remove the limitation on the number of their apprentices. While the House was considering this motion, Mr. O'Hara rose and said that a friend of his, not a Roman Catholic, had asked him to present a petition embodying the true wishes of that community. Thereupon a member remarked that it was an odd way of presenting a petition to state that it came not from any particular body of men, but from an intimate acquaintance. This was too much for Richard Burke, who had drawn the petition and was then in the gallery of the House. He rushed into the body of the House and was about to speak. A general cry of "into custody" was raised, and Burke fled.[1] Mr. O'Hara then withdrew the petition, and leave was given to Sir Hercules Langrishe to introduce his bill.

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[1] It has often been asserted that Keogh was not a United Irishman. Mr. Madden says: "There can be no longer any necessity for withholding the fact that Mr. Keogh, one of the 'chief Catholic leaders,' was a member of the Society of United Irishmen, as well as his friend, Richard McCormick, the secretary of the Catholic Committee" (*United Irishmen*, iii., p. 49).

[2] Writing to William Burke in August, 1792, Richard said that he left Ireland at the end of April, and that he was about to return there (*Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, iii., p. 487).

The bill passed very rapidly, and without material changes, through the Commons. On the 24th February, it was read a third time, and carried to the Lords by its proposer and a great number of members.[2] During the progress of the bill through the House, two petitions had been presented in favour of further concessions to the Roman Catholics—one from the General Committee, praying that the Roman Catholics should be restored "to some share in the elective franchise"; the other from the United Irishmen of Belfast, asking the House to repeal all penal and restrictive laws against that body. Both petitions had been received and placed on the table. Three days later

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xii., p. 39-41.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 247.

David Latouche moved that the petition presented by the General Committee should be rejected, and the motion was carried by 208 to 23. This appears to have been done partly to rebuke some inflammatory manifestoes which had been published in the newspapers of the day, and partly to declare the fixed resolution of the House not to grant political power to the Roman Catholics. Latouche then moved, "That the petition from the Society of the United Irishmen of Belfast should also be rejected". The question was put, and the petition rejected with two or three negatives.[1]

Up to the time when Tone became agent and secretary to the sub-committee, the claims of the Roman Catholics had been advanced in sober and temperate language. Thus in October, 1791, the Dublin Roman Catholics issued a declaration stating, "it is not for the Irish Catholics, armed as their cause is with reason and with justice, like public foes to seek advantage from public calamity. They ought to advance their claim at a time more favourable to discussion, when the condition of the empire is flourishing and tranquil. They might seem culpable to their country if . . . they reserved their pretensions in ambuscade to augment the perplexities of some critical emergency."[2] In February, 1792, the General Committee published a specification of their claims, in which the utmost extent of their wishes was declared to be admission to the practice of the law, capacity to serve as county magistrates, the right of being summoned on grand and petty juries, and lastly, the right of voting for Protestant members, but in such manner only, as that a Roman Catholic should not vote unless, in addition to his forty shilling freehold, he rented or cultivated a farm of twenty pounds a year, or was possessed of a freehold of the same value.[1] In March of the same year, the General Committee published a declaration on behalf of the Roman Catholics, renouncing the anti-social principles held by some of their body, and expressing their desire that no Roman Catholic should be allowed to exercise the elective franchise unless he had taken an oath to defend the arrangement of property established by the different Acts of Attainder and Settlement.[2] But as soon as Tone, that able and bitter enemy to the British name and connection, was taken into their councils, the Roman Catholics dropped their tone of entreaty and became dissatisfied with a gradual and progressive emancipation. Instead of waiting for the effects of time, temper, and the growth of liberality, they resolved to call a Roman Catholic Convention, elected by universal suffrage, in order to show their strength, and overawe the Government into a concession of their claims.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xii., pp. 182-231. George Ponsonby voted for the rejection of both petitions.

[2] *Ib.*, xv., p. 264. The declaration is given in Plowden's Append., p. 165.

Sometime before the summer assizes of 1792, the sub-committee despatched a letter to every parish priest in the country, enclosing a plan for the election of delegates to a Roman Catholic Convention to be held in Dublin.

The plan was intended to make it evident that the delegates were elected by *all* the Roman Catholics in the kingdom, and great importance was attached to this effect.[3] The letter and plan were signed by Edward Byrne, a United Irishman, and countersigned by another United Irishman, Richard McCormick, secretary to the General Committee, and were composed by Wolfe Tone. Of these, the letter was extremely seditious and inflammatory. It told the Roman Catholic peasantry that they were slaves, and poisoned their minds by falsely asserting that they were turned out of their farms to beggary in order to make room for Protestant voters.[1] The plan proposed that the elections should be held by means of primary and secondary assemblies, that is, electors were to be chosen by all the Roman Catholics in each parish, and these electors were then to choose in each county its delegates to the Convention. It was also provided that each county should at the same time elect as associate delegates one or two resident inhabitants of Dublin, as the attendance of county delegates would only be required on important occasions. This last provision was intended to throw the entire management of the affairs of the Roman Catholics into the hands of those resident in Dublin, who were, as Tone tells us, "to the Catholics of Ireland, what Paris at the commencement of the French Revolution was to the departments. Their sentiment was that of the nation, and whatever political measure they adopted was sure to be obeyed."[2]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xv., pp. 264, 268. Lord Clare's speech, 10th February, 1800.

[2] Plowden, Append., p. 179 ; Tone's *Life*, i., p. 436.

[3] Opening sentence of the plan. Both documents are given among Tone's political writings (*Life*, i., p. 439).

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[1] Among the innumerable mistatements of Mr. Lecky the expulsion of Roman Catholics from their farms for political purposes is one (vi., p. 505). The Speaker of the Commons answered this charge. "He now spoke in the hearing of the greatest part of the landed property in the kingdom, and he appealed to their knowledge whether such assertion was founded on fact in any part of Ireland. It was not" (*Irish Debates*, xiii., p. 333). Dr. Duigenan, a very able man, stated in the same debate: "This is one of the most impudent falsehoods that ever was advanced in any age or country . . . it being now almost the universal mode of letting lands in Ireland for the landlord to advertise his land at the expiration of a lease to be let to the best and highest bidder". He also urged that the charge was impossible, the Roman Catholics who applied themselves to farming being to the Protestants engaged in the same pursuit, as six to one (*Ib.*, p. 114). This falsehood caused great disturbances in Connaught. There the poor people, "thus deceived, in order to prevent this, attacked the Protestants, robbed them of their arms, plundered and murdered them. In the South some disturbance took place on the same account. Some of the rioters acknowledged that persons had come from Dublin swearing them to rise and punish the Protestants for intending to turn them out of their farms" (*Ib.*, xv., p. 221).

[2] *Life*, i., p. 61.

The plan then stated the specific business which was to occupy the Convention, *viz.:* "An humble application to our gracious Sovereign, submitting to him our loyalty and attachment, our obedience to the laws, a true statement of our situation, and of the laws which operate against us: and humbly beseeching, that we may be restored the ELECTIVE FRANCHISE, and an equal participation in the benefits of the TRIAL BY JURY. We have the FIRST AUTHORITY for asserting that this application will have infinite weight with our gracious Sovereign and with Parliament, if our friends are qualified to declare that it is the universal wish of EVERY Catholic in the nation."[1] When the Convention met, this limitation to two objects was, at the request of the Belfast United Irishmen, thrown to the winds.

The publication of the letter and plan aroused a great and natural alarm among the Episcopalians and the local supporters of Government. At the ensuing assizes, a great number of the grand juries throughout Ireland published resolutions against the meeting of a convention, declaring it to be illegal and dangerous to the peace of the country. To meet the charge of illegality, Tone drew up a case for the sub-committee to be laid before two King's counsel, one of whom, Simon Butler, was a United Irishman. The questions were, whether the sub-committee had infringed the law, and whether persons carrying the plan of a convention into execution would subject themselves to any penalty. To elect an assembly purporting to act as a permanent representative body, a function and privilege which belonged to and could only be exercised by the constitutional Parliament, was clearly illegal. But after the two conventions of the volunteers in Dungannon and Dublin, and the National Congress of Napper Tandy, it was too late to allege that a convention, called to present a petition to the king, was illegal, and the answers of counsel were favourable.

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[1] The capitals are in the original.

The Roman Catholic Committee was greatly encouraged by some proceedings which took place in Belfast during this year before the actual assembling of their Convention. In January, 1792, a very large meeting of the inhabitants was convened to consider the propriety of petitioning Parliament in favour of the Roman Catholics. The meeting had been called on the requisition of the United Irishmen, and was presided over by the Rev. Sinclair Kelburn, a United Irishman and a confessed Republican. A question arose at the meeting, whether their petition should pray for the total and immediate emancipation of the Roman Catholics, or whether it should contain the words "from time to time and as speedily as the circumstances of the country and the general welfare of the whole kingdom will permit". A debate ensued, and it was carried by a large majority that the relief should be immediate and entire.[1]

On the 14th of July, the French Revolution was again celebrated in Belfast. A grand procession was organised in which two brigades of volunteers, consisting of seven hundred and ninety men, took part. The procession marched through the principal streets, "accompanied by such an immense multitude as never before appeared in this place,"[2] and entered the great square within the Linen Hall. There a great circle was formed, and William Sinclair, a United Irishman, moved an address to the National Assembly of France, which was carried "without a single dissentient voice". The address was written by Dr. Drennan. William Sinclair then moved an address to the people of Ireland, written by Tone, and containing a declaration that no reform which did not include all sects and denominations of Irishmen would be just or satisfactory. It was proposed that this declaration should be expunged, and a paragraph recommending a gradual emancipation of the Roman Catholics inserted in its place. A debate ensued which lasted till seven o'clock in the evening, when the motion for expunging was lost by an immense majority, the dissentients being very few, not more than five. A great number of the leading members of the Catholic Committee[1] had gone down to Belfast to witness for themselves how this address, which recommended their immediate emancipation, would be received, and to judge thereby how far they could rely on the assistance of the North. They returned to Dublin satisfied that they would be supported by the volunteers and United Irishmen of Ulster, and that the union between themselves and the Presbyterians was firmly established.[2]

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[1] *Belfast Politics*, pp. 284-310; *Belfast Historical Collections*, pp. 363, 364. After the petition had been settled, it was resolved unanimously that the Roman Catholic clergy and laity should come forward "with a declaration of their religious sentiments as far as they are connected with civil and political liberty". The hint was taken, and on the 17th March, the General Committee issued a declaration of the Catholics of Ireland, but the clergy were silent.

[2] *Belfast Politics*, p. 332.

Encouraged by the revolutionary restlessness which was showing itself both in Belfast and Dublin, in September, the first Belfast Volunteer company met and resolved that they would never accept pay from Government or submit to take any military oath or obligation to it. Similar resolutions were entered into on the same day by the Belfast Volunteer company.[3] Early in October, the four societies of United Irishmen in that town published declarations of their sentiments on Irish politics, in which they condemned the opposition of the grand juries to the claims of the Roman Catholics, and strenuously exhorted the latter to persist in their demands till their exertions were crowned with success.[1] And in November a large meeting, consisting of volunteers and citizens, was held to celebrate the retreat of the Allied armies from France. A United Irishman presided, and proposed an address declaring the joy of the inhabitants of the town at the event, and "attributing the success of the French arms to the signal interposition of the Deity, as an example of the success with which He will crown the effort of mankind in every attempt to establish civil and religious liberty". In the evening the town was illuminated, and in some houses transparencies were exhibited with mottoes and representations; such as "France is free; so may we; let us will it". A gallows suspending an inverted crown with the words "May the fate of every tyrant be that of Capet;" "Irishmen, look at France;" "Liberty and Equality".[2] We must remember, while reading of these transactions, that to look for example and guidance to France in the latter end of 1792 was a very different thing from sympathising with her efforts in 1790 and 1791. In August, 1792, the Swiss Guards had been massacred for doing their duty, and the King and his family had been imprisoned. In September, the horrible butchery, which lasted from the second to the sixth day of the month, had been consummated; and on the 22nd, France had been declared a Republic.

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[1] Tone, *Life*, i., p. 68.

[2] For the celebration of this day, the Debate, and the Addresses to the French Assembly and the People of Ireland, see *Belfast Politics*, pp. 328-348; *Belfast Historical Collections*, pp. 371-380.

[3] *Belfast Historical Collections*, pp. 381-382.

The same spirit was showing itself in Dublin. A new military association, calling itself the First National Battalion, and avowing its Republicanism by its device of a harp without a crown, but surmounted by a cap of liberty, was formed in that city. This body was composed almost entirely of Roman Catholics, and wore green jackets, green helmets and green cockades.[1] Even the old corps were manifesting signs of sedition. At a meeting of delegates from several of the Dublin companies of volunteers, thanks were voted to the United Irishmen for their incendiary address of the 14th of December calling on the volunteers of Ireland to resume their arms. The Goldsmiths' Corps issued a summons to the other companies to meet and celebrate the retreat of the Duke of Brunswick and the victories of the French in the Low Countries. The summons was addressed, "Citizen soldiers," and was dated, "the last year of slavery". In consequence of these proceedings, the Viceroy on the 8th of December, 1792, issued a proclamation for dispersing all unlawful assemblies and preventing unauthorised bodies appearing in arms. Notwithstanding the proclamation, the Goldsmiths' Corps attempted to exercise as formerly, but were met by a magistrate who informed them that their meeting was illegal. Thereupon they dispersed quietly, and with them the volunteers of the city and county of Dublin ceased to appear in arms.[2] The proclamation was taken into consideration by the House of Commons, and, after a very mischievous speech from Grattan, an address of thanks for it was voted to the Lord-Lieutenant. The only dissentient was Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who declared that he thought the Lord-Lieutenant and the majority of the House the worst subjects the King had.[3]

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collections*, pp. 383; *Belfast Politics*, pp. 352-360.

[2] *Ib.*, pp. 361-363.

The Roman Catholic Convention met on the 3rd of December, 1792. It consisted of upwards of 230 members, representing the counties, cities and towns in the country.[4] It had been called to present a petition to the King praying for the elective franchise and an equal participation in the benefits of trial by jury. But this limitation did not please the United Irishmen of Belfast. Luke Teeling, one of the county Antrim delegates, convened a meeting of United Irishmen in that town, and consulted them, whether, as the delegates had been instructed on two points only, the Convention should confine themselves to these. The United Irishmen were unanimously of opinion that the petition of the Convention should ask for the removal of every grievance.[1] Accordingly Teeling moved in the Convention to "generalise the prayer of the petition," and the motion passed unanimously.[2] When the petition had been agreed to, the mode of transmitting it to England was then considered. For the express purpose of throwing a slur on the Irish administration, it was resolved to pass by the Viceroy, and to send their petition by deputies of their own.[3] Five members of the Convention, namely, Edward Byrne, John Keogh, Christopher Bellew, James Devereux and Sir Thomas French were elected to go to England. Of the five who were chosen to present a petition, declaring the loyalty of the Roman Catholics, two were United Irishmen; and one of the deputies, whose name is unknown, on the arrival of the deputation in London, entered into treasonable negotiations with the French ambassador.[4] Before the adjournment of the Convention, unanimous thanks were voted to the citizens of Belfast, *i.e.*, the United Irishmen of that town, "to whom," said the proposer, Luke Teeling, "we owe that we meet here in safety; they stand sentinels at our doors; they support you, Mr. President, in that chair". A sentiment which was received with acclamation by the whole meeting.[5] Finally, having thanked Tone for his faithful services, the Convention resolved to adjourn *sine die*, with the understanding that it would reassemble when summoned by the sub-committee.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xv., p. 244.
[2] *Ib.*, xiii., pp. 76-82.
[3] *Ib.*, xiii., p. 82.
[4] Tone's *Life*, i., p. 456.

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[1] Tone's *Life*, i., p. 220; *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 33.

[2] Tone's notes on the debates in the Convention, *Life*, i., p. 227.

[3] *Ib.*, pp. 84, 231. [4] *Ib.*, i., p. 108. [5] *Ib.*, p. 85.

The petition thus agreed upon contained several untrue statements, the most remarkable of which was that the Roman Catholics of Ireland had been for a century uninterruptedly loyal. At the time this statement was made, the Defenders, who were all Roman Catholics, were devastating the counties of Louth, Meath, Cavan, Galway, Monaghan, Donegal and parts of county Dublin, robbing and burning the houses and farmyards of the Protestants, and frequently attacking the King's troops.[1] During the century, thus confidently spoken of, the Roman Catholics had been comparatively quiet, but an argument drawn from enforced incapacity to do mischief furnishes but a poor plea for perfect freedom from restrictions. To assert that they were loyal during the existence of the Penal Laws is obviously absurd, for it is as much as to say, that men love those who treat them harshly. The truth is, the Roman Catholics of Ireland, as a body, never have been loyal to the Protestant King of Great Britain, and never will be until the religious fervour which prevails among them has cooled down to what it is in France and Germany. As long as the Penal Laws constrained them, they proclaimed their loyal and peaceable demeanour as a reason why they should be freed from their disabilities. Since the abolition of these laws, they have been courted and petted as no other community in the empire has ever been, with the result, that at the present day they openly display their disloyalty and glory in it. Tone, who drew the petition, knew that the assertion was false, and in his private journal told the truth, "that, however, it might be disguised or suppressed, there existed in the breast of every Irish Catholic an inextirpable abhorrence of the English name and power".[1] In another part of the same journal, he declared that he could say from his own personal knowledge that the great majority of men who composed the General Committee of the Roman Catholics were "sincere Republicans, warmly attached to the cause of France, and, as Irishmen and as Catholics, doubly bound to detest the tyranny and domination of England, which has so often deluged their country with their best blood".[2] Tone enjoyed the perfect confidence of the Roman Catholics, and knew, as no other man did, their secret sentiments, and his evidence does not stand alone. Dr. MacNeven, a Roman Catholic, and one of the Irish Directory, declared on oath in 1798 that "the lower order of Catholics consider Protestant and Englishman, that is, English settler, as synonymous and as their natural enemy".[3]

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[1] Report of the Lords' secret committee, 1793; *Irish Debates*, xiii., p. 98. Statement of Facts, addressed to the magistrates, the military and yeomanry of Ireland. Dublin, 1798.

The delegates appointed to convey the petition, for the purpose of giving *éclat* to their mission, resolved to visit Belfast on their way to London. They arrived there accompanied by Tone, as their secretary, on the 12th December. They were received in that town with marked attention. On their departure, after a short stay of two hours, the horses were taken from their carriages, and they were drawn through the streets by the populace. At the outskirts of the town, they were allowed to proceed amid cries of "Success attend you," "Union," "Equal laws," and "Down with the ascendancy". As a sign of the times it may be mentioned that on the same day that this demonstration was made, the "Irish Jacobins of Belfast" published a most seditious "Address to the People," for the publication of which the printer of the *Northern Star* was afterwards prosecuted and convicted.[1]

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[1] *Life*, i., p. 52.

[2] *Ib.*, ii., p. 189.

[3] Report of the Lords' secret committee, 1798, Append., p. 3.

On their arrival in London, the delegates were presented at Court by the Home Secretary, Dundas. They delivered their petition to the King, and it was graciously accepted. A short time afterwards they had an interview with the Secretary, when they informed him that the peace of Ireland depended on the concessions the Government would make—an extraordinary intimation from deputies who founded the claims of their constituents on their uninterrupted loyalty. Dundas told them in reply that the King was sensible of their loyalty and attachment, and that their case would be recommended in the speech from the throne at the ensuing meeting of Parliament.

The decision which Pitt came to at this juncture, namely, to grant the elective franchise to the Roman Catholics, has been ascribed to his desire for a Legislative Union. But it is not necessary to look so far forward. The actions of practical statesmen are rarely determined by hopes of the future. War was in sight, and it was a matter of the greatest importance to keep Ireland quiet, as being the portion of the empire most open to attack. There had been, and was, great restlessness both in England and Scotland. Serious riots had taken place, and seditious publications were pouring from the press. He had lost all confidence in the Irish Parliament. No reliance could be placed on men who had taken advantage of the difficulties of Great Britain to extort their independence, who had rejected their own best security, a Commercial Union, and had established a precedent for separation at the time of the Regency. The frightful state of Ireland could not escape his notice. There, an insurrection of the lower order of Roman Catholics, marked by the most bitter animosity against the Protestants, was spreading like wildfire from county to county. In the North, the United System was extending with terrible rapidity; "you can form no conception," wrote Neilson from Belfast to Tone in November, 1792, "of the rapid progress of Union here, and I do assure you, we are further forward than even I expected we should have been in a twelvemonth. The universal question throughout the country is: when do we begin? Do we refuse hearth money or tithes first?"[1] Large quantities of arms and gunpowder were being clandestinely imported,[2] and constant attempts were made to seduce the soldiery. All things betokened revolution or rebellion. Pitt thought that he could conciliate the Roman Catholics by large concessions, and thus detach them from their alliance with the Presbyterians. He resolved to grant the former all that could be given with safety to the peace of the country and the Protestant establishment.[3] To prevent opposition to his plan, he let it be known in Ireland that the Episcopalians must not expect the aid of Great Britain if a contest for ascendency should arise between them and the Roman Catholics. This intimation reduced that body to despair; for they believed that Great Britain had abandoned them. At last they had become aware of the strength of their enemies, their own weakness, and their complete dependence on Great Britain. From this time, we hear no more of the pride of independence; the Opposition fell away to such numbers as seven and fourteen; every claim that could inconvenience the Government was set aside; every bill that strengthened the executive and their own position, was passed at once; and every reform which threatened the close boroughs, their last line of defence, was defeated by immense majorities.

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collections*, pp. 388-391, 427.

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[1] Tone's *Life*, i., p. 221.

[2] *Irish Debates*, xiii., p. 149. Report of the Lords' secret committee, 1798.

[3] In the debate on the petition of the Irish Roman Catholics in 1805, praying for complete emancipation, Pitt said: "Previous to the union of Great Britain and Ireland, I could conceive no case in which the advantages now solicited could be given to the Catholics, in consistency with the security of the connection between the two countries, in consistency with the interests of the Protestants, the firm and tried friends of British connection, in consistency with the internal tranquillity of Ireland, or in consistency with the safety of the established religion of that country" (Detailed Report, London, 1805). These words refute the insinuations of Mr. Lecky that, but for the opposition of the Irish Administration, Pitt would have granted total emancipation in 1792 and 1793.

At the opening of Parliament in January, 1793, the Viceroy informed the Houses that he had it on particular command from the King to recommend to their serious attention the situation of the Roman Catholics. On the 18th of the same month, Hobart, the Chief Secretary, introduced a bill for the further relief of that body. It proposed to give them the elective franchise; the right of being grand and petty jurors, of endowing colleges and schools, and of carrying arms, if possessed of a certain property qualification. It also opened to them the army and navy, and all civil offices except about thirty of the highest. Though the Commons had in the previous session rejected the claim of the Roman Catholics to the elective franchise by a majority of 208 to 23, Hobart's bill now passed—many of the Episcopalians, as a member declared, viewing the proceedings in the silent agony of despair, and deploring the introduction of such a measure "at the omnipotent fiat of a British Minister".[1]

During this debate, two members exhibited one of those sudden changes of opinion which betoken a want of fixed principles. On the 25th February, George Knox proposed the insertion of a clause admitting Roman Catholics to sit in the House. In the preceding session, this gentleman had declared in Parliament that as long as Great Britain remained attached to a Protestant establishment, it was necessary that Protestants should be the ruling power in Ireland, and that a Catholic Parliament would not be long without a Catholic King.[1] The fact was, that in the interval Knox had been engaged in an intrigue with Keogh and Tone for the appointment of a Lord Lieutenant favourable to the Roman Catholics, and had been converted to their views by the hope of his own advancement.[2] In 1792, George Ponsonby had voted that the petition of the Roman Catholics, praying only for some share in the elective franchise, should be rejected.[3] He now advised the House to "kick out" Hobart's "silly bill," and to bring in another of their own, granting everything to the Roman Catholics.[4] Three days before this proposal was made, a member had declared in the House that George Ponsonby was insincerity personified, than which a truer statement was never made.[5]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xiii., p. 329. As to the belief of the Commons that they were obeying the mandate of the British Minister, see further, *Ib.*, pp. 132, 134, 138, 216, 343, 344, 346.

The Act, though intended to be a healing measure, was one of the most absurd ever passed. It said to the Roman Catholics: you may vote, but you must not vote for those you have confidence in; you must vote for those who are opposed to your claims and of whose principles you disapprove. It gave to the lower orders of that body all the advantages of the Constitution, while by denying the legislative franchise to their noblemen and gentry, it tended to break down the authority of their natural leaders, and to detach from property all political power, contrary to the principle of the Constitution. At one stroke the Irish electorate was tripled, and a poor, ignorant and bigoted peasantry, many of whom could not speak the English language, was given the power of determining every county election. So poor were they that in the present session more than one-half of them were excused from paying any hearth tax. Almost all the land in Ireland was let on leases for lives,[1] and the practical effect of the Act was to create something like universal suffrage. It destroyed the equality and conformity of rights in the empire. After its passing into law the King reigned over the English and Scotch Roman Catholics by one rule, and over those in Ireland by another. In Ireland, a Roman Catholic was admissible to all civil and military places of trust under the Crown, and was invested with all the privileges enjoyed by Protestants, except a seat in Parliament and a few great offices. In England, he was excluded from all civil and military offices under the Crown or in cities and corporations. He could not vote at the election of members of Parliament unless he took the oaths of allegiance and supremacy; in Ireland those oaths were swept away in his favour, and a new one, founded on the declaration of his General Committee,[2] was established. In England, a Roman Catholic could not even serve in the militia, for, by the Act regulating that force, no one could be enrolled in it unless he swore that he was a Protestant.[3] The Irish Roman Catholic was in a far better condition than the Protestant Dissenter in England, who was incapacitated by the Corporation and Test Acts. By the former, a Dissenter could not be elected to any office relating to the government of a city or corporation without taking the sacrament according to the form of a church to which he did not belong. The latter Act made the same religious ceremony necessary to his holding any civil or military office. The elective franchise, too, was only enjoyed by Dissenters in England in an imperfect manner, for they were debarred from exercising it in thirty towns and corporations which returned representatives to Parliament. On a careful consideration of these facts, it may be asked: why did not Pitt make a similar experiment in England? why did he not propose to the British Parliament to abolish the Test and Corporation Acts and the oath which prevented the English Roman Catholics from exercising the elective franchise? The only answer is the necessity of the times. In England the Roman Catholics were few and peaceable; in Ireland they were the vast majority and thoroughly disaffected.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xii., p. 146.

[2] Tone's *Life*, i., pp. 185, 186, 197-99; plan knocked on the head, p. 205.

[3] *Irish Debates*, xii., p. 221.

[4] *Ib.*, xiii., p. 275.

[5] *Ib.*, p. 247.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xiii., p. 213. [2] *Ib.*, p. 362.

[3] Charles Butler. *Historical Account of the Laws respecting Roman Catholics, etc.* London, 1795.

While the Parliament yielded so far to the influence of Pitt as to extend the franchise to the Roman Catholics, they took care to strengthen the executive and to curb sedition outside their House, though unable to repress it within.[1] The events abroad and at home taught them the necessity of strong measures. In France, the King had been executed on the 21st of January, and on the 1st of February, war was declared against England by the Convention of that Kingdom. In the North, the volunteers, now entirely under the influence of the United Irishmen, were rapidly increasing their numbers,[1] and in Belfast strong symptoms of a revolutionary spirit appeared. On the 26th December, 1792, a general meeting of the inhabitants of the town was held in the meeting house of a Presbyterian clergyman. At the meeting, another Presbyterian clergyman, Sinclair Kelburn, gave utterance to the most republican sentiments, and declared that the Lords should be done away with, and that the King and Lords were two to one against the people.[2] Resolutions were also passed, recommending provincial conventions from parishes and towns, and urging a complete re-establishment of the volunteers. A military chest, to supply with ammunition and other necessaries the volunteers already embodied and embodying in the town, was established, and a committee was appointed to correspond with every part of Ireland for the purpose of calling county meetings and provincial conventions.[3] Pursuant to the resolutions passed at this meeting, a convention of the Province of Ulster met in Dungannon on the 15th of February, 1793, while the Parliament was sitting. There, resolutions were voted, recommending the immediate and entire emancipation of the Roman Catholics; denouncing the establishment of a militia, and the war against France; exhorting the volunteers to increase their numbers and improve their discipline; and appointing a committee to communicate with the other provinces, and to concert the means of calling a National Convention, should such an assembly be considered necessary.[4] It is to be noted that in the election of delegates to this convention, they were chosen by universal suffrage in parishes, towns, and cities, which was not formerly done.

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[1] On the first day of the Session, Grattan made an extremely seditious speech. He declared that the alarming state of the country was owing to the conduct of the King's Ministers; and that they had deprived the Parliament of Ireland "of all weight, authority, or credit". Having stated that the address of the Dublin Corporation against the claims of the Roman Catholics was the act of the Castle, he continued: "If, then, the three millions of Catholics should, with the assistance of twenty-six millions in France, rebel and dispossess you of your properties and charters, they have in the city publication an authority—they have the law of conquest—and they have your excuse for appealing to the law of conquest, because they have the sentence of the corporation—nothing else to relieve them from the doom of slavery" (*Irish Debates*, xiii., pp. 6-15).

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[1] "More volunteer companies springing up like mushrooms, nobody knows why" (Tone's Diary, 15th August, 1792; *Life*, i., p. 173).

[2] *Irish Debates*, xiii., p. 58; *Belfast Politics*, p. 385.

[3] *Belfast Politics*, pp. 376-386; *Belfast Historical Collections*, pp. 396-398.

[4] *Belfast Historical Collections*, pp. 408-411.

The measures taken by Parliament were passed with great readiness. The regular army was increased by 5,000 men. A militia numbering 16,000 was raised. The Gunpowder Act[1] forbade the importation of powder and arms, and their removal from one part of the country to another, a prohibition which prevented any revival of the volunteers. The Convention Act[2] made all assemblies, except the Parliament, purporting to represent the people, either of a district or of the kingdom, unlawful, and required all magistrates to disperse such meetings. Grattan attempted to delay the Militia Bill, but the House would not listen to the proposal.[3] He opposed the Convention Bill, and was beaten by 128 to 27.[4] Other Acts of a defensive nature were also passed, as the Alien Act, the Traitorous Correspondence Act, and an Act for the trial of treasons committed out of the King's dominions.

Pitt's scheme of conciliation was general and included the Opposition. That body had been for some time bringing forward a place bill, a responsibility bill, and a pension bill. These measures were to be passed. The Hereditary Revenue, the additional duties, and all taxes not appropriated were to be carried to and constitute a consolidated fund, to be applied to the uses and purposes directed by the Civil List Act[5] of this year, and to none other. A yearly sum of £145,000 to be issued thereout and applied to the payment of salaries and other charges on the civil list.[6] The pension list was to be reduced to £80,000, which sum was never to be exceeded, and till the reduction, pensions granted in any one year were not to exceed £1,200. After reduction, no one pension to exceed £1,200 except to the royal family or on an address from either House of Parliament. No person holding a place created after the present session, or enjoying a pension for years or during pleasure, to be capable of being elected to Parliament, and actual members accepting a place of profit were to vacate their seats, though they might be re-elected. Persons appointed to offices worth £200 a year were to swear that they did not hold them for the benefit of a member of Parliament; and members after their election were to swear, on taking their seats, that they did not enjoy a pension for years or during pleasure, or any place incompatible with a seat in the Commons.[1]

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[1] 33 Geo. III., c. 2.

[2] *Ib.*, c. 29.

[3] *Irish Debates*, xiii., pp. 385, 391.

[4] *Ib.*, pp. 529-539.

[5] 33 Geo. III., 34.

[6] It must be remembered in reading this arrangement that "since the accession of the House of Hanover, not a guinea of the revenue of Ireland had been applied to the support of the royal dignity. Pensions had, indeed, been granted to some of the royal family, but of these no man had

Pitt's plan did not end here. Barren heath or waste ground improved into arable land or meadow was exempted from tithe for seven years.[2] A Libel Act similar to Fox's was passed. The East India trade was opened to Irish manufacturers—the company, which possessed the monopoly, undertaking to provide 800 tons of shipping for carrying goods from Cork to the East Indies. But the most important benefits conferred on Ireland during this session arose from two Acts—one English, the other Irish. By an English Act, explaining the navigation laws, Irish merchants were allowed to import into Great Britain the productions of the West Indies. By the Irish Act,[3] all persons inhabiting houses with only one hearth, and not occupying

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ever disapproved" (Per Hely Hutchinson, then Provost and Secretary of State, *Irish Debates*, xiii., p. 477).

[1] 33 Geo. III., c. 41.

[2] Grattan had introduced a bill for the reclamation of barren land more than once, but its language and form were so defective that it did not become law (*Irish Debates*, xi., pp. 336-346).

[3] 33 Geo. III., c. 14.

land or farms of more than five pounds yearly value, were exempted from the hearth tax, and thus, more than a half of the poorest population in Europe was freed from direct taxation, and practically from all taxation.

The rise of the United Irishmen and the league between the Presbyterians and Roman Catholics boded ill for the peace of the country, but there was another element in the universal anarchy which prevailed in Ireland during the last ten years of the eighteenth century, namely the Association of Defenders. To understand this general outbreak of the most indigent portion of the Roman Catholic population, it is necessary to bear in mind the condition of the peasantry. The great bulk of that peasantry had always been in extreme distress, but, at the time we are speaking of, their condition had become infinitely worse, owing to the vast increase of their numbers and the great rise in prices, while the value of their labour still remained at the old rate of remuneration. In spite of numerous dearths and famines, they had tripled their numbers since the commencement of the century, and the resources of the country had by no means increased in proportion to the advance in population. The best proof of their wretchedness is an Act which passed in 1793.[1] By this Act, more than one half of them were excused from paying a tax which, if divided among a family, amounted to fourpence a head per annum. The Penal Laws had pressed very heavily upon them, and discouraged all industrial life among them. But these laws had another effect which was equally fatal to the well-being of the peasantry. They reacted on those in whose favour they had been passed, and debased their moral and social instincts. In a well-ordered and well-governed community, we are surrounded and bound down by innumerable restrictions which shape our lives, and secure the fulfilment of our duties to our fellow-subjects. There is hardly a transaction among men that is not controlled or in some way affected by law. Public opinion, which is largely the creation of law, follows its footsteps, and, penetrating farther, exercises even a greater influence on conduct. But little is left to the caprice, the malice, or the enmity of individuals, for all are constrained by common rules. The direct tendency of the Penal Laws was to destroy the authority of these disciplinary and salutary restraints. They threw almost unlimited power into the hands of the privileged class, and placed them above the law; generated a contempt for those against whom they were directed, and begot a sense of triumph which hardened the heart against the claims of duty or charity. Ireland was chiefly an agricultural country, and the vast majority of its inhabitants were Roman Catholics occupied in the cultivation of land. To the Penal Laws and to the feelings engendered by them must be attributed the indifference of land owners to the welfare of their tenants, the neglect of agriculture, and the sordid and inhuman custom of letting their lands to the highest bidder—a custom which effectually prevented the growth of affection or confidence between the two classes. The position of a Roman Catholic on the estate of a resident landlord was hard enough, but on the lands in possession of a middleman, or belonging to an absentee, he was ground to powder.

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[1] 33 Geo. III., c. 14.

Certain tenets of the religion professed by the peasantry must also be taken into consideration. These tenets were unfavourable, in a high degree, both to their loyalty to a Protestant Prince and to harmonious communion with their Protestant fellow subjects. They looked not to their own Sovereign and legislature for the direction of their conduct and the performance of their social duties, but to a foreign Prince. They admitted the spiritual supremacy of the Pope in faith and morals, and along with it a large amount of temporal power and jurisdiction, which is inextricably bound up with, and annexed to, a spiritual supremacy. Another belief entertained by them seriously affected their relation to their King and Protestant countrymen. From their cradle to their grave they were taught that they alone were the heirs of the Christian promises: and that outside their Church "there was neither salvation nor remission of sins".[1] So the infallible voice had declared, and a hierarchy, solely depending on and appointed by the Roman See, was sure to inculcate these maxims to their flocks.[2] It would be idle to deny, as long as human nature is what it is, that such uncharitable teaching exercises a strong influence on conduct, especially on that of the young and ignorant, and that instead of union and peace it breeds estrangement and builds up a wall of separation between the citizens of a country.[3] Experience and observation show us that even a difference of political belief is a cause of animosity and division, but religion is a far more powerful engine of discord and disintegration. It may be asked what loyalty could be felt by a Roman Catholic who believed that his Sovereign was a heretic doomed to everlasting punishment, or what affection could he bestow on a Constitution which was founded on a Church Establishment which he despised as false, and regarded as an instrument for the propagation of heresy? It is impossible that such a man could give the same hearty and unmixed allegiance to a Protestant Government which a subject of the same persuasion gives. A merciful disposition or native independence of thought might lead an educated Roman Catholic to doubt this doctrine of exclusive salvation, but what was there to mitigate its evil effects among an ignorant and fanatical peasantry, who witnessed daily the condition of their own Church and the triumph of a heretical Church; who saw their nobility and gentry excluded from public life; and who believed that they themselves had been persecuted for their religion?

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[1] "Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam . . . extra quam nec salus est nec remissio peccatorum." Bull Unam Sanctam. This Bull is given both in Latin and English in Manning's *Vatican Decrees*, 1875.

[2] It is not true that the Irish Roman Catholics in their oath renounced the infallibility of the Pope. The words of their oath are: "It is not an article of the Catholic faith, neither am I thereby required to believe or profess that the Pope is infallible". Dr. Troy, Archbishop of Dublin, published a pamphlet, in which he proved that Roman Catholics did not by their oath renounce the doctrine (*Irish Debates*, xv., p. 346).

[3] Some Roman Catholics have ventured to assert that the English Church has preached the same doctrine of exclusive salvation. But the difference is very great in the teaching of the Churches. The English excludes those who deny the fundamental tenets of Christianity. The Roman Catholic excludes all other Christians.

The word Defender originated in the county of Armagh, and was at first wholly unconnected with differences in religion. In 1784, two farmers, both Presbyterians, quarrelled and fought near Markethill, a small town in that county. The friends and neighbours of each of the combatants adopted the quarrel, and formed themselves into factions composed indiscriminately of Presbyterians and Roman Catholics. Each faction assumed the singular name of Fleet, and the fleet was denominated from the parish or townland where its members resided.[1] The Nappagh and the Bawn fleets were the first formed, the former being much the more powerful and better armed. The people living about Bunker's Hill, between Armagh and Newry, formed themselves into a third fleet, joined the Bawn fleet in order to resist the Nappagh fleet, and first took the name of Defenders.[1] In 1785, the two parties met—the Nappagh fleet numbering 700, all armed with guns, swords and pistols, the Bunker's Hill Defenders and the Bawn fleet more numerous but not so well armed—and were on the point of engaging, when some gentlemen of position in the county intervened and induced them to separate in peace. Gradually the old religious differences made themselves felt, and the Presbyterians and Roman Catholics separated into hostile camps, the latter retaining the name of Defenders. A system of mutual aggression and challenges ensued between the two parties, and numerous fights took place. The Defenders made every effort to obtain arms, and the Presbyterians, knowing that this was illegal, endeavoured to disarm them. For this purpose they visited or broke into their houses about daylight, and from this practice obtained the name of Peep of Day Boys. In 1787, the disturbances in the county were so numerous that two troops of dragoons were sent to Armagh.[2] Early in 1788, the Viceroy, having received information of many outrages, ordered troops to march to Armagh, Tandragee, Keady and Newtown Hamilton to assist the civil magistrates.[3] In the same year, Lord Charlemont, the governor of the county, and the grand jury issued a manifesto against all Roman Catholics who should assemble in arms, and also against those who should attempt to disarm them without legal authority.[4] Charlemont thought he had pacified all parties, but he was soon undeceived.[1] In November following, a small body of the Benburb volunteers, numbering thirty-nine, with their side arms only, were marching to Armagh for divine service. On their way they were attacked by a large crowd of Defenders, who pursued them into the town with volleys of stones. The volunteers, having received information that they would be waylaid on their return, borrowed eleven muskets to defend themselves. On reaching the place, a narrow, sunken defile, where the morning attack had begun, they found several hundred Defenders collected. The officer of the volunteers sent a messenger to the Defenders entreating them to allow his party to pass, and disavowing all intention of molesting them. An answer was returned that the volunteers might pass. They had nearly got through the crowds which lined the ditches on both sides of the road, when a volley of stones was thrown, which knocked down some volunteers and struck many more. Upon this, three or four of the volunteers fired, but without effect. A cry was then raised among the Defenders, "D—— them, they have nothing but powder," and the stoning was continued. The volunteers then fired again, and two of the Defenders fell. To prevent themselves being surrounded in the narrow road, the volunteers crossed into a field, and while doing so their officer was knocked down by a stone and his gun taken from him. On seeing this the volunteers fired, wounding three or four more. Some days after, the Defenders lodged information against, amongst others, two volunteers who were employed on a bleach green. In order to apprehend these men, several hundred Defenders, of whom a hundred were armed with guns, the rest with swords and spears, surrounded the bleach green, and remained there a night and a day. The owners of the green went to Armagh and requested a magistrate to go to their relief. The magistrate took some regulars with him, and on their arrival the Defenders carried arms as the soldiers passed them. The two volunteers surrendered themselves, and then the Defenders "were pleased to disperse."[1]

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[1] Musgrave, *Rebellions, etc.*, i., p. 53; *Parliamentary Reports on Orange Associations*, 1835, p. 33.

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[1] Mr. Lecky says: "The name taken by the Catholics implies that the Protestants were the aggressors". This misstatement as to the origin of the term and implied vindication of the Defenders can be traced. It first appeared in Wolfe Tone's cunning defence of the Roman Catholic sub-committee; from that production it passed to a book, *Pieces of Irish History*, compiled in New York by two United Irishmen who had escaped the well-deserved gallows. The younger Grattan adopted it, and from him Mr. Lecky borrowed it.

[2] Musgrave, i., p. 55.

[3] *Charlemont Correspondence*, ii., p. 69.

[4] Musgrave, i., p. 57.

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[1] *Charlemont etc.*, ii., p. 76.

Defenderism soon spread far and wide. In 1789, it had become a secret association, with lodges scattered over the country, and communication between those in different counties fully established. The Defenders had their committees, their officers whom they were bound to obey, and their secret oath.[2] Like the United Irishmen, they dispersed seditious emissaries among the people to work upon their hopes and to entice them to acts of violence.[3] Their outrages, outside the county of Armagh, first attracted the attention of Government in 1790. During this and the following year a great number of them were brought to justice and transported. Notwithstanding these examples, they broke out into open insurrection during the years 1792 and 1793 over sixteen counties and attacked Protestants of all denominations. It would be impossible to give a catalogue of their crimes against individuals, a few only of their most daring and remarkable misdeeds will be given here. So many barbarous outrages were committed by them against the Protestants of the county Louth, the smallest in Ireland, during the autumn and winter of 1792, that at the following Spring Assizes twenty-one Defenders were sentenced to death, twenty-five to transportation, twelve to imprisonment for conspiracy to murder, thirteen who were indicted for murder postponed their trials, and warrants were issued against eighty who had absconded.[1] On the 22nd of January, 1793, a large body of well armed Defenders attacked a detachment of the 41st regiment near Petersville, county Meath. About the same time, a company of the same regiment was attacked at Manor Hamilton in Leitrim by Defenders who destroyed their baggage. In the same month, a large band of them assembled at Woodford in Galway, declared they would pay no more taxes, and swore many of the people to be true to them and their cause. In February, one body of Defenders attacked a detachment of the 8th regiment at Athboy in Meath, and another attempted to carry off four cannon from Garrett's-town, but were repulsed by the local volunteers. On the 13th of this month, a proclamation was issued offering a reward of £100 to anyone who would discover and prosecute a Defender. About the same time, a large body of them at Ardee, in Louth county, fired on the King's troops, who returned the fire, killed seven of the Defenders, and took many prisoners. In May and June, there was a general rising of Defenders in Sligo, Leitrim, and Roscommon ; houses were plundered and burned throughout a large district. On the 15th July, 3,000 Defenders marched to attack the town of Wexford. Major Vallaton was shot at the head of a party of his regiment while defending the town, and eighty lives were lost on this occasion. In the same month a detachment of the 38th regiment was attacked by them ; though the soldiers fired on them, they succeeded in burning the house of an active magistrate in the neighbourhood. Towards the end of 1793, there was a lull in the outrages, and at the opening of Parliament in January 1794, the Viceroy told the Houses that " the spirit of insurrection, which was for some time prevalent among the lower orders of the people, is in general suppressed ".[1] But the disturbances soon recommenced. In February, numerous bodies of Defenders assembled near Bandon in Cork, and swore many people not to pay taxes and to obey Captain Right. They even threatened to storm the town. In March, they attacked a party of the Carlow militia and wounded a magistrate with the militia while reading the Riot Act. At Drumsna in Leitrim, a party of Defenders drove nine policemen into a house, which they set on fire and murdered the policemen as they endeavoured to escape from the flames. In May, a very large body of Defenders assembled at Kilnaleek in Cavan, and remained three days under arms; while there, they laid waste a large tract of the estate of the Bishop of Meath, having plundered and burned the houses of many of his tenants. In August, 10,000 Defenders assembled on the hill of Slievebawn in Roscommon, and sent a detachment of 2,000 men to burn the house of a Mr. Mills.[2]

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[1] The whole of this story is given in *Charlemont's Correspondence*, ii., pp. 78, 79, 83.

[2] Musgrave, ii., Append., p. 2; *Irish Debates*, xvi., p. 102.

[3] *Irish Debates*, xvi., p. 102.

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[1] Musgrave, i., p. 63. See also a pamphlet published in Dublin in 1798, under the title, " To the Magistrates, Military and Yeomanry ".

In the winter of 1794, the Defenders' system of midnight murder, robbery, and arson threatened the lives and properties of every Protestant throughout large districts of Ireland. Their oath at this time was " to aid and assist the French when they should invade Ireland, and to fight under General Jourdan ". Mr. Sergeant Stanley, who had often gone on circuit as judge in different parts of the country, declared in the House of Commons that innumerable judicial records in the North, West and East proved that this oath was the common bond of union between the Defenders, and "that he himself had seen in his special situation the same facts and the same oaths proved in the most distant parts of the West that appeared in evidence before him in the most distant parts of the East and North".[1] "These men, who are called Defenders," said Wolfe Tone in February, 1796, "are completely organised on a military plan, divided according to their respective districts, and officered by men chosen by themselves; the principle of their union is implicit obedience to the orders of those whom they have elected for their generals, and whose object is the emancipation of their country, the subversion of English usurpation, and the bettering the condition of the wretched peasantry of Ireland. The eyes of this whole body, which may be said, almost without a figure, to be the people of Ireland, are turned with the most anxious expectation to France for assistance and support. The oath of their union recites 'that they will be faithful to the united nations of France and Ireland' and several of them have already sealed it with their blood. . . . This organisation of the Defenders embraces the whole peasantry of Ireland being Catholics."[2] This general union accounts for the confidence of the Defenders. In the province of Connaught their revolts bore the appearance of civil war; "bodies of insurgents marched in array through the country and offered battle to the King's troops; others of them attacked and plundered of arms the King's towns, Drumsna and Athleague; another body stormed the iron-works at Arigna, put the workmen into a state of requisition and obliged them to make pikes, spears and other weapons to arm the insurgents. . . . They had set up a military law of their own, and established courts martial, by which they tried all persons who presumed to apply to the jurisdiction of the civil magistracy; and in the counties of Roscommon,

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xiv., p. 2.

[2] These facts are taken from Musgrave, and the pamphlet entitled, "To the Magistrates, Military and Yeomanry of Ireland ". The statement as to the number killed at the Battle of Wexford is from *Irish Debates*, xvi., p. 23.

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[1] This was said on the 14th October, 1796; *Irish Debates*, xvii., p. 65.

[2] Tone's *Life*, ii., p. 188.

Sligo and Leitrim, they actually sentenced men to receive 500 lashes upon their backs and inflicted the punishment for this mode of appeal".[1] Contemporaneously with these public acts, the Defenders committed the most atrocious cruelties and barbarities upon individuals. They assembled generally at night for the purpose of plunder and murder, and this circumstance rendered it almost impossible to discover the guilty.[2] It was part of the system of the Defenders to murder those who were likely to give evidence leading to a trial, and those who had given evidence at a trial of Defenders, or who had prosecuted them.[3] The frequency of the murders of witnesses led to a change in the law, and it was enacted that the depositions of a murdered witness should be good evidence to go to a jury. One proceeding of the Defenders deserves notice as a proof of their utter contempt for the civil powers. In the spring of 1795, the magistrates of the county met in the town of Roscommon to consult on the means of raising the price of labour. While they were sitting, a local insurrection broke out, and the house of a gentleman, who was then advocating an increase of wages, was plundered and burned though close to the town.[4] Shortly after this, the Government sent down Lord Carhampton with an armed force into Connaught. He and the magistrates adopted a summary, but very necessary mode of procedure. Defenders were seized and sent to serve in his Majesty's fleet, but "no man was sent away from the county in which he lived, who was not sworn against as a Defender, and deemed guilty by the committee of magistrates sworn to do justice, or who did not afterwards confess his guilt and went without reluctance, thankful for his life being saved".[1] A bill was introduced in 1796, indemnifying Lord Carhampton and the magistrates for any acts committed by them in restoring peace to Connaught. Grattan made an attempt to delay its passing, but his motion was put aside without a division, even his friend and follower, Mr. Conolly, declaring that if Grattan desired proof of the necessity of the Act, "he would call for the attendance of the widows and orphans who had been left to survive the crimes and outrages of those miscreants who had disgraced the country"[2].

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvi., p. 43.

[2] "These wretches associate together by night for the purpose of plunder, murder and devastation" (Per the Attorney-General, *Ib.*, p. 103).

[3] "They [Defenders] have adopted another system, which is to prevent witnesses appearing against them in trials; they have adopted a system of assassination" (The Attorney-General, *Ib.* See also the horrors mentioned by one of the members for the county Westmeath, *Ib.*, p. 49).

[4] *Ib.*, xxv., p. 24.

The success[3] which attended the measures of Lord Carhampton and the western magistrates induced the legislature to pass a very severe Act against the Defenders, giving the magistrates in proclaimed districts similar powers of sending idle and disorderly persons to serve in the fleet. In order to justify the stringency of the proposed Act, the Attorney-General in February, 1796, moved four resolutions, which passed the House with the single negative of Lord Edward Fitzgerald.

1. That the spirit of conspiracy and outrage, which has appeared in certain parts of this kingdom, and has shown itself in various attempts to assassinate magistrates, to murder witnesses, to plunder houses, and seize by force the arms of his Majesty's peaceable subjects, requires that more effectual powers should be given to the magistracy.

2. That in such parts of this kingdom as the said spirit has shown itself, or to which there may be cause to apprehend its being extended, it will be necessary that the

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvi., p. 49. [2] *Ib.*, p. 45.

[3] As to this success, see the general testimony given in the Commons, *Irish Debates*, xvi., pp. 42-52, and by the Attorney-General, *Ib.*, p. 102.

magistracy should have enlarged powers of searching for arms, ammunition and weapons of offence, and of seizing or securing the same, for the preservation of the peace and the safety of the lives and properties of his Majesty's peaceable and loyal subjects.

3. That from the many attacks which have been made on the houses of individuals by large bodies of armed insurgents for the purpose of taking arms and money by force, and murdering those who had the spirit to enforce the laws or give information against offenders, it will be necessary that the magistrates should have enlarged powers to prevent such bodies hereafter from assembling or meeting either to plan or execute such horrid purposes.

4. That it will be necessary to give the magistracy further powers with respect to vagabonds, idle and disorderly persons, and to persons liable to be deemed so, or who have no lawful trade, or any honest means to obtain a livelihood.[1]

The Act[2] founded on these resolutions, though extremely rigorous, passed the Commons without a division. It enabled the Lord Lieutenant and Council, upon the requisition of seven magistrates assembled at a session of the peace, to proclaim the whole or any part of a county. After such proclamation, magistrates might arrest all persons found out of their houses from one hour after sunset till sunrise, and bring them before two justices of the peace. If such persons could not prove that they were absent on lawful business, they were to be deemed idle and disorderly and sent on board the fleet. Magistrates might also enter houses between the same hours, and all persons absent therefrom were to be treated in the same way. All persons taking unlawful oaths, or tumultuously assembling in the day time, or found in public houses after nine o'clock at night, or hawking seditious papers, or unable on examination to prove that they followed a lawful occupation or had a sufficient substance of their own, were to be considered idle and disorderly and to be sent to the fleet. There were also exceedingly strict provisions relating to the possession and registration of arms. This law was enacted, we are told in the report of the secret committee of the Lords, 1798, in consequence of a system of midnight murder, robbery and outrage which began in 1792, and was so matured in 1796 under the influence and direction of the Irish Union as nearly to depopulate a very considerable district in two of the provinces of every loyal and peaceable inhabitant of it. The Act was not put into execution until the 14th of November, 1796;[1] where it was enforced by an active magistracy it did much good, but treason was too deeply rooted to yield to this remedy, and the Defenders and United Irishmen had already become amalgamated into one association.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvi., pp. 102-106.

[2] 36 Geo. III., c. 20. "An Act more effectually to suppress insurrections, and to prevent the disturbance of the public peace."

In all the counties of Ireland, except four, the Protestants were greatly outnumbered. In each county there were then but a few constables, and the duties which are now fulfilled by the police were performed by the army. The small numbers of the Protestants dispersed over a county prevented their union for defence; and soldiers are slow to move, and unfit to act as police. The defenceless isolation of the Protestants made them an easy prey to the Defenders. But it was wholly different in Armagh, where the strength of the Presbyterians guarded themselves and the other Protestants from the wanton and cruel outrages which were committed in the other counties. Though there were many challenges and combats between the Peep of Day Boys and the Defenders, their contests at first resembled the squabbles of well-matched factions. But a hideous outrage of the Defenders altered at once the relations which had existed between the two parties, and turned the fights of faction into a religious war. Richard Jackson of Forkhill, in the county of Armagh, died in 1787, having devised an estate of about £4,000 a year to the following purposes: that his demesne of 300 acres, all unoccupied land, should be colonised by Protestants, and that four schools should be established on it to instruct, without charge, children of all denominations. In 1789, the trustees of the will obtained a private Act of Parliament to enable them to carry out its provisions, and they appointed one of themselves, Edward Hudson, rector of Forkhill, to be their local manager. Hudson did his best to introduce some order and industry into the district, but the savage inhabitants were opposed to all change, and openly declared that they would not suffer the establishment to be made. Hudson was twice fired at, and the new colonists were persecuted and their property destroyed. Alexander Barclay, a Protestant, had been appointed master of one of the schools. Though he was paid for sixty scholars only, he had, for the six months previous to the attack on him, been teaching upwards of a hundred, and was, to all appearance, a general favourite with his neighbours.[1] On the evening of the 28th of January, 1791, a band of Defenders rushed into his house, threw him on the floor, and stabbed him repeatedly. They then put a cord round his neck so as to force out his tongue, which they cut off as far as they could reach. Lastly, they cut off the four fingers and thumb of his right hand. From the husband they turned to the wife, a handsome young woman. They cut off one of her breasts, sawed off four fingers and a thumb, and cut out her tongue. They then battered and bruised her in a dreadful manner.[1] Her brother, a lad of thirteen, had come from Armagh that morning to visit her. They cut out his tongue, and cut off the calf of one of his legs. While the miscreants were torturing Barclay, he asked them whether he had ever offended them. They said not; but that was the beginning of what he and those like him would suffer.[2] The Defenders then plundered the house, and, as if exulting in their triumph, marched on their road with lighted torches.[3]

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[1] Report of the secret committee of the Lords, 1798.

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[1] Hudson to Dobbs, 29th January, 1791, *Charlemont Correspondence*.

This appalling crime created the greatest alarm and terror amongst the Protestants of all denominations in the county, and these feelings were intensified by the threats uttered against them,[4] and the extraordinary zeal of the Roman Catholics in collecting arms. At the spring Assizes for the county, 1791, that is, about three months after the Forkhill tragedy, the grand jury and the sheriff passed the following resolution, "that a rage among the Roman Catholics for illegally arming themselves has of late taken place and is truly alarming; in order then to put a stop to such proceedings and to restore tranquillity, we do pledge ourselves to each other as magistrates and individuals, and do hereby offer a reward of five guineas for the conviction of each of the first twenty persons illegally armed and assembled as aforesaid ".[1] In 1792, Wolfe Tone, the United Irishmen, and the General Committee of the Roman Catholics made great efforts to compose the quarrels between the Defenders and the Peep of Day Boys.[2] Early in the following year, some Roman Catholic prelates published exhortations to their flocks enjoining obedience to the laws, and, later in the same year, Archbishop Troy issued a pastoral letter to the Roman Catholics of his diocese, in which he expressed his abhorrence of the outrages committed by the Defenders, whom he branded as " the vilest offenders and transgressors of Divine and human laws ".[3] These efforts and exhortations had some effect in quieting the country for a time, but the disturbances broke out again with great violence in 1795. In the September of this year, a large body of Defenders appeared in arms near Loughgall in Armagh. The Peep of Day Boys assembled to oppose them. The parties skirmished for a day or two without much harm. A gentleman of property, Mr. Atkinson, and the priest of the parish endeavoured to reconcile the parties and succeeded so far as to induce them to agree to a treaty of peace. Both parties separated and were on their way home, when the Defenders were reinforced by large contingents from the counties of Louth, Monaghan, Cavan and Tyrone. In spite of the treaty so lately concluded, the Defenders attacked the little village known as the Diamond. Protestants of all denominations in the neighbourhood united for the defence of the village, and a sharp conflict took place in which the Defenders, though by far the more numerous, were defeated with a loss of twenty or thirty.[1] This battle of the Diamond took place on the 21st of September, 1795, and, on the evening of the same day, the first Orange lodge was formed by Episcopalians for defence and mutual protection.[2]

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[1] The wife died, the husband and the boy survived. It is extraordinary that all letters relating to this tragedy have been omitted from the edition of the *Charlemont Correspondence* authorised by the Master of the Rolls.

[2] Select Committee on Orange Lodges, p. 4; Report of the Trustees of the Charity, Musgrave, i., p. 61.

[3] See Musgrave and the Report of the Trustees of the Charity to the Bishop of Dromore, given by him, i., pp. 59-62. The evidence of Colonel Verner before the Select Committee on Orange Lodges, 1835. Verner knew the boy and had heard the story from him.

[4] "The Protestants are everywhere in the greatest terror, and unless Government affords them assistance must leave the county, as this recent instance of inhumanity, and the threatenings thrown out against them, leave no doubt upon their minds of what the intentions must be against them" (Report of the Trustees).

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[1] Plowden, ii., p. 335 ; Musgrave, i., p. 62.

[2] Tone's *Life*, i., pp. 163-177. See also the Address of the General Committee to the Defenders, *Ib.*, i., p. 479.

[3] Seward's *Collectanea Hibernica*, iii., pp. 92-97.

Before the battle of the Diamond, the Defenders had shown the utmost hostility to the Protestants of the county, and had threatened "to destroy man, woman and child of them".[3] But their defeat and the dispersion of their allies had disheartened them; nor could they expect a new treaty to be offered them. Their old opponents, the Peep of Day Boys, took advantage of their defeat, and commenced a barbarous persecution of all Roman Catholics for the purpose of driving them out of the county. The outrages of the Peep of Day Boys became so numerous and atrocious that Lord Gosford, Governor of the county, called a meeting of the magistrates in order to devise the best means of checking the disturbances. Twenty-four magistrates attended the meeting and unanimously agreed to the following resolution: "That it appears to this meeting that the county of Armagh is at this moment in a state of uncommon disorder: that the Roman Catholic inhabitants are grievously oppressed by lawless persons unknown, who attack and plunder their houses by night, and threaten them with instant destruction unless they immediately abandon their land and habitations".[1] A committee was formed and measures adopted which seem to have gradually quieted the greater part of the county.[2] One portion, however, that which touched on Newry, continued disturbed, and on the 2nd December, 1796, was, on the memorial of eighteen justices of the peace, proclaimed under the Insurrection Act, as was also a part of the parish of Newry.[3]

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[1] See the Report of the Select Committee on Orange Lodges, pp. 6, 35 213, 214.

[2] The expression, Orange lodge, had long been known in the North of Ireland. In 1783, when the first stone of the Belfast White Linen Hall was laid, there was a procession in the town which was led by the Belfast Orange lodge. This lodge consisted of a hundred and fifty noblemen and gentlemen of the first distinction. It had been revived in 1780, and was well known for its munificent acts of charity and benevolence (*Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 233).

[3] *Irish Debates*, xvii., p. 153. Note that in this volume there are two series of pages numbered the same way.

Scribblers like Plowden [4] have attributed this persecution to Orangemen, but a few considerations will show us how groundless this charge is. The meeting of magistrates convened by Lord Gosford took place on the 21st of December, 1795, that is, exactly three months after the establishment of the first Orange lodge. The lodge was composed exclusively of Episcopalians,[5] and its members were bound by their own constitution to support every peaceable man in the exercise of his religion, whatever it might be.[6] The county had been disturbed for ten years by the mutual quarrels and outrages of the Defenders and the Presbyterian Peep of Day Boys; yet we are asked to believed that the newly-formed Orangemen, who were not Presbyterians, were guilty of this persecution. Four of the magistrates who, with Lord Gosford, had condemned the persecution, afterwards joined the Orange Society.[1] Is it likely that these gentlemen, one of whom was brother of Lady Gosford and another a high ecclesiastic, would have become Orangemen if they believed that the Society had joined in the persecution which they themselves had denounced? Wolfe Tone's journal comes down to June, 1798. He was kept well informed of the state of affairs in Ireland by the numerous exiles who found him in Paris. If the Orangemen had been conducting themselves in 1795 and 1796 as alleged by their enemies, Tone would have heard something of it; yet the word Orangeman does not occur in his journal. Colonel Cradock was sent down to Armagh to put an end to these disturbances, but he knew nothing of Orangemen. On the 22nd of February, 1796, he stated in Parliament: "The conduct of the Protestants called Peep of Day Boys in the county of Armagh was atrocious, and their barbarous practices must certainly be put down, but, at the same time [he must mention], that in September last the Catholics were the aggressors".[2] On the 13th of October, in the same year, a member speaking in the Commons of these disturbances described the two parties engaged in them as "the adverse parties of Puritans and Papists, that is, certain obstinate Roman Catholics on the one side, and various sectaries, perhaps more obstinate still, under the name of Presbyterians, on the other".[3] Seward, the author of the *Collectanea Hibernica*, does not mention Orangemen as the persecutors of the Roman Catholics. He says, writing of the beginning of the year 1797: "The contentions which continued in Ulster between the Peep of Day Boys and the Defenders obliged many Roman Catholic families, particularly of the lower class, to flee from the county of Armagh and to seek refuge amongst the inhabitants of Connaught".[1]

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[1] The fullest account of this meeting, and the measures adopted by the magistrates, is in Seward's *Collectanea Hibernica*, iii., pp. 157-161.

[2] "As for what you hear from Armagh I hope and trust there may be some mistake. Immediately after the Assizes some few outrages were, I believe, committed, but they were speedily checked, and since that time tranquillity is so perfectly restored that many of the fugitives have returned, have repaired their houses and dwell in them quietly and undisturbed" (Charlemont to Haliday, 2nd July, 1796. *MSS. of Charlemont*, ii., p. 275).

[3] *Ib.*, iii., pp. 177-179.

[4] Plowden has even gone so far as to assert under an "is said," that the Orangemen were bound by an oath to exterminate the Roman Catholics (vol. ii., p. 537).

[5] First Report of the Select Committee on Orange Lodges, pp. 46, 258.

[6] *Ib.*, pp. 14, 36. See a remarkable declaration of the Orangemen presented to the Lord-Lieutenant on the 25th February, 1798, quoted at page 14 of the First Report.

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[1] Report of Select Committee on Orange Lodges, pp. 257, 258.

[2] *Irish Debates*, xvi., p. 112.

[3] *Ib.*, xvii., p. 42.

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[1] Vol. iii., p. 191.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FITZWILLIAM EPISODE.

During the session of Parliament in 1794, no mention whatever was made of the Roman Catholic question. In the previous session of 1793, towards its end, George Ponsonby in the name of his brother William had introduced a plan of reform but it had not been debated. It was again brought forward in this session, 1794, by William Ponsonby. It proposed that each county, and the cities of Dublin and Cork, should return each three members instead of two. It enlarged all the other cities, towns and boroughs, returning members to Parliament, to a distance of four miles from the centre of each, and gave a vote to every resident in the district thus formed who had a ten pound freehold. The plan also contained the most elaborate provisions for settling the boundaries of the several districts.[1] The introduction of this bill by the Ponsonbys and Grattan, when the country was engaged in a war and distracted by conspiracies, was an act of folly. Nobody wanted the bill. As was said during the debate, "no one body in the country corporate or incorporate, no society of loyal subjects, no requisition of freeholders to their Sheriff, no petitions of the People to their Parliament, had given colour to the adoption of this measure."[2] Even the introducers of the bill themselves entertained no hopes of its passing. "I well remember," says Alexander Knox, "to have heard the gentleman who seconded the motion for the bill being received and read, declare that he and his friends had so little encouragement from the Public, that they only brought the business on from a regard to their own consistency. For [said he] how can we hope to succeed when we are not supported by a *single petition?*"[1] The United Irishmen scoffed at it. Dr. Drennan thus described it in a letter written by him to Lord Fitzwilliam in 1795: "it appeared to be dictated by a spirit of penurious and starveling policy. It seemed rather to proceed from a discouraged Opposition, wishing to obtain something, rather than to suit a generous administration desirous to give all . . . it was a plan which turned legislators into land measurers, and land measurers into legislators . . . paling in as with pieces of pack-thread the liberality of the Constitution, and circumscribing with brief authority the principles of eternal justice."[2] The bill was rejected by 142 to 44".[3]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xiv., pp. 62-68.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 104.

In the spring of this year, 1794, William Jackson, an Irish clergyman, came to England on a secret mission from the Committee of Public Safety in Paris, in order to discover the disposition of the people towards the French. He learned that the English were patriotic and that all parties would unite to repel an invasion. He then resolved to go to Ireland on a similar errand. During his stay in London he divulged his plans to an old friend, Cockayne, an attorney, who at once communicated them to the Government. Cockayne was directed to accompany Jackson to Ireland, and the pair arrived in Dublin on the 1st of April, 1794. A day or two after their arrival, Jackson made acquaintance, or renewed an old one with Leonard Macnally, a barrister and a United Irishman.[1] Macnally asked the two strangers to dinner and also others to meet them; among whom were Simon Butler and Lewins afterwards the agent of the United Irishmen in Paris. During dinner, something was said of Hamilton Rowan, then in Newgate. By means of Lewins, Jackson was introduced to Rowan, who invited him and Cockayne to breakfast to meet a third person, and to concert the means of sending a trusty negotiator to the French Government. The meeting took place, the persons present being the host, Jackson, Cockayne and Wolfe Tone. A statement of the situation of Ireland, written by Tone, was produced and read. This document was intended to show the weakness of the Government in Ireland, and the readiness of the Roman Catholics to join the invaders.[2] Jackson was pleased with the statement and urged Tone to go to France. Tone objected on several grounds, he had a wife and children, he would lose money due to him by the Roman Catholic Committee, etc. At this time Tone was obliged to attend the assizes at Drogheda, and on his return positively declined to go. Rowan then recommended Dr. James Reynolds as a fit and proper person. When Reynolds was applied to, at first he consented to go, then remembered he did not understand one word of French, and finally determined not to hazard the journey. Tone's production fell into the hands of Government, and on the 28th of April, Jackson was arrested.[3] Rowan and Reynolds fled the country.

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[1] *Political Essays*, p. 178.

[2] Letter to Lord Fitzwilliam, 1795. In the Haliday Collection of Pamphlets, Royal Irish Academy.

[3] *Irish Debates*, xiv., p. 108.

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[1] Madden, *United Irishmen*, ii., p. 572.

[2] The document proved at the trial is different from that given in Tone's *Life*. The real statement is to be found in *State Trials*, xxv., p. 841.

[3] Jackson was not tried till the 23rd of April, 1795, nearly a year after his arrest. He was arraigned before the King's Bench on the 30th of June, 1794, and pleaded not guilty. On the motion of the Attorney-General, the 7th of the following November was appointed for the trial.

Tone was apprehended and brought before the Privy Council at the Castle. Being examined, he told all he knew, but refused to swear any information or appear in court as a witness. At the same time he said that, if forced to do so by compulsory process, he would declare himself further. A friend of Tone's, Marcus Beresford, a son of the First Commissioner of Revenue, endeavoured with success to save him from a prosecution. The Government agreed not to put Tone on his trial on the terms proposed by Beresford, namely, that he should leave the country and go either to America or the East Indies, and that before leaving he should deposit with Beresford a minute detail of all conversations between Jackson, Rowan and himself. This narrative was given to Beresford by Tone on the express condition that it should not be used to the prejudice of any person mentioned in it, but that, in case he himself should return to the country before the expiration of a certain time, it might be produced to procure his own conviction. Beresford adhered strictly to his promise, and kept the document, which contained important and interesting information respecting the plans and intentions of the United Irishmen, under lock and key till his death in 1797. After his death it was discovered by his widow, who preserved it with equal care until she left Ireland after the rebellion, when she delivered it to Lord Clare. He also kept it secret.[1] Though Tone had agreed to leave the

On that day Jackson applied for a postponement, which was granted. On the 26th of January, 1795, Jackson was put to the bar, and said he was ready for trial, but the Attorney-General applied for a postponement, on the ground of the absence of a witness. Finally, the trial took place on the 23rd of April, 1795. On the 30th, Jackson was brought up for judgment, but died in the dock, having taken a large dose of arsenic. The trial is well worth reading, as showing the indulgence and even tenderness of the Court of three Judges towards the prisoner.

[1] See the history of this transaction in the letters of Marcus Beresford; *Beresford Correspondence*, ii., pp. 24-35; and compare with it Tone's own account, *Life*, i., pp. 114-120.

country, he continued to act as secretary to the Roman Catholic sub-committee, and actually accompanied to London the deputation which was despatched to England to pray for the continuance of Lord Fitzwilliam as Viceroy, in the early part of 1795. During the short administration of that nobleman he was not troubled. His son even asserts that he was asked to join Grattan's party, but that he refused,[1] a statement extremely improbable. On the accession of Lord Camden, Tone was required to fulfil his engagement, and on the 20th of May, 1795, left Dublin for Belfast. In Tone's statement of what he calls his compromise with Government, he acknowledges "that it was certainly in the power of the Government, if they pleased, to ruin me as effectually as they possibly could by my death". Yet this unscrupulous man felt no gratitude for the mercy extended to him. Before he left Dublin he had interviews with Russell and Thomas Emmet, and with Keogh and Richard McCormick, secretary of the General Committee of Roman Catholics. To them he unfolded his plans of going to France and obtaining help from that country, and was awarded their most cordial approbation.[2]

In July, 1794, a number of Whig magnates, as the Duke of Portland, Lord Fitzwilliam, Lord Spencer, Mr. Windham, etc., disapproving of the policy of Fox, seceded from their party and joined the government of Pitt. The coalition—as one of the parties to it, Mr. Pelham, afterwards the Earl of Chichester, declared—was unconditional and "without any stipulation whatever".[3] Lord Fitzwilliam, indeed, in one of his two intemperate letters to Lord Carlisle written in forgetfulness of duty and truth, says, "if the general management and superintendence of Ireland had not been offered to his Grace [Portland], that coalition could never have taken place". But this statement is disproved by the conduct of the Duke himself. Immediately after the coalition had taken place, the Duke proposed to Pitt that he himself should take over the department which Dundas then filled, *viz.*, the Colonies and the conduct of the war. Pitt was greatly embarrassed by the proposal. He feared that the new union might be dissolved, but was resolved not to entrust the conduct of the war to Portland. He wrote at once to Lord Grenville, suggesting that, if he were to take the new-modelled Home Department, the Duke would probably be satisfied to succeed Grenville in the Foreign Office. "I am persuaded," wrote Pitt, "you will agree with me that the two things to be avoided are, that the arrangement should break off, or that the War Department should be put into the Duke of Portland's hands[1]." Lord Grenville placed himself at the disposal of Pitt, but the sacrifice was not required, for two days later Pitt wrote to Grenville "I can now have the satisfaction to tell you that everything is finally settled, and in a better way than we expected . . . The Duke says the Foreign Office is that of all others which he would the least like to accept, and that it cannot be so well in any hand as yours. The result is that he has made up his mind to accept the Home Department *without* the management of the war, but *with* the Colonies[2]." It is manifest that if, as Lord Fitzwilliam says, the Duke had been allured into the coalition by the offer of the management of Ireland, he would not immediately after have applied for Dundas's place.

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[1] Tone's *Life*, i., p. 128.

[2] *Ib.*, pp. 124-127.

[3] *Irish Debates*, xv., pp. 184, 190.

Pitt took a large and generous view of the new alliance. Though many of his friends doubted the wisdom of admitting the Whigs into his administration, he himself had no fears. "Are you not afraid," said one, "that you may be outvoted in your own Cabinet?" "I am under no anxiety on that account," was the reply. "I place much dependence on my new colleagues, and still more on myself".[1] Accordingly, the Duke of Portland obtained the Home Department. Lord Spencer became Lord Privy Seal, and afterwards took his place at the Admiralty: and Lord Fitzwilliam was made Lord President, with the understanding that he should be sent to Ireland as Viceroy, but not until a suitable office had been found for Lord Westmoreland, who had accepted the Lord-Lieutenancy on the express condition that he should return to one not less advantageous than the Post Office, which he had quitted.[2] Until such a situation could be found, Fitzwilliam could not go to Ireland.

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[1] Pitt to Lord Grenville, *Dropmore MSS.*, ii., p. 595.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 597.

Pitt not only called the English Whigs to office, but he resolved to treat the Irish in the same way, notwithstanding their conduct on the Regency question, provided the claims of those who had acted so loyally on the same occasion were not interfered with. "Anything that appeared to me," he wrote in the following December to the Marquis of Buckingham,[3] "to convey an imputation on your system of measures in Ireland, or to injure the fair claims of those who supported you, I felt myself bound decidedly to resist, from a sense of what was due to you as well as to myself. But, on the other hand, I could not feel that, under the present circumstances, the past conduct of those of whom you and I had so much just reason to complain ought to be a bar against readmitting them to a share of the Government, provided they were willing to join on fair and honourable grounds, and on the same principles as have been felt sufficient to bury former distinctions of party in this country."[1]

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[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii., p. 253.

[2] Lord Grenville to Thomas Grenville, *Court and Cabinet of Geo. III.*, ii., p. 313.

[3] Mr. Lecky calls this nobleman Lord Buckinghamshire. The nobleman of this name had been Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland in 1797; Lord Buckingham was Lord-Lieutenant when the Regency question arose, that is, 1787-1789.

In one of his letters to Lord Carlisle, Fitzwilliam says that he had been "compelled, by incessant solicitations and the most urgent importunities," to undertake the Government of Ireland. His conduct from the first day of the coalition was wholly inconsistent with this statement. He published his nomination everywhere. On the 11th of August, 1794, long before he was appointed, and while it was still uncertain when he should go to Ireland, he wrote to Thomas Grenville, then at Vienna, to offer him the Chief Secretaryship.[2] On the 23rd of the same month he appealed to Lord Charlemont for his support, in the event of his being appointed Lord-Lieutenant.[3] On the same day he wrote to Grattan, who was then personally unknown to him, apprising him of his approaching appointment, and calling him and his party to his future councils. From the first paragraph of this letter it is evident that Fitzwilliam was not then justified in taking any step whatever with reference to his future administration. He commences: "Though I have not as yet the honour of an appointment to succeed Lord Westmoreland, there certainly is great probability of that event taking place very soon." He then tells Grattan that he intends to take the system of the Duke of Portland "as the model by which I shall regulate the general line of my conduct. . . . It is, sir, to you and your friends the Ponsonbys, that I look for assistance. . . . Without the hope, which I am vain enough to entertain of that assistance, I should decline engaging in so hopeless a task as the government of Ireland. It is that assistance which I am, therefore, now soliciting." He concludes with a hope that Grattan will "form with the Castle that sort of intimate, direct and avowed connection as will render support doubly efficacious." In the postscript to this unjustifiable letter he warns Grattan not to quote him as an authority for the announcement of his promotion, "my name not having yet been mentioned to the King on account of his absence at Weymouth".[1]

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[1] *Dropmore MSS.*, ii., p. 653.

[2] Thomas Grenville to Lord Fitzwilliam, *Court and Cabinet of Geo. III.*, ii., p. 278.

[3] *Charlemont's Correspondence*, ii., p. 246.

We may be certain that the man who announced his coming to Ireland as Viceroy to a perfect stranger before his appointment was settled, did not withhold the information from his connections, the Ponsonbys.[2] The news was known in Ireland as early as the 15th of July, 1794, and was mentioned in the papers.[3] The Ponsonbys began to brag of the great changes that were to be made by their friends,[4] and that Lord Fitzwilliam was to come with full powers to inaugurate a new system. Neither Lord Fitzwilliam nor his connections, the Ponsonbys, observed the least delicacy or reserve, but talked openly of the coming changes and removals before any arrangement had been concluded respecting Lord Westmoreland.

About the middle of September, reports reached the ears of Pitt and Lord Grenville of the proceedings of Lord Fitzwilliam. On the 15th of this month, Lord Grenville wrote to his brother Thomas, to whom Fitzwilliam had offered the Irish Secretaryship, "the intended successor to Lord W[estmoreland] is talked of more openly than I think useful, at a time when there is yet no arrangement made for his quitting his station. But what is worse than that, ideas are going about, and are much encouraged in Dublin, of *new systems* there and of changes of men and measures."[1] A little later Grenville again wrote to his brother that he and Pitt had heard "that the party who had acted in Opposition in Ireland, and particularly Ponsonby and Grattan, had held the strongest language respecting assurances received by them from the Duke of P[ortland] and Lord F[itzwilliam]; that the latter was immediately to be declared Lord-Lieutenant; that Mr. Pitt had given Ireland over entirely to them, and that a new system of men and measures was to be adopted. In these reports particular persons were mentioned as being to be dismissed, and amongst them the Chancellor. The only impression which these produced on my mind was, that Lord F[itzwilliam] had talked too soon of his intended appointment. . . . And in this impression I wrote to you, thinking all the rest to proceed only from the usual exaggeration of reports of this nature, particularly in Ireland; and feeling confident that before any measure was really determined upon, we should have an opportunity of discussing it fully, and of weighing the proposed advantages of it against the very great objections which naturally and at first sight occur. Soon after this we heard that Lord F[itzwilliam] had actually taken such steps in Ireland as marked his persuasion of his being immediately to be appointed."[2] While Pitt and Grenville were considering what step it might be best to take on this information, the Duke of Portland wrote to Pitt, urging the immediate appointment of Lord Fitzwilliam "as a thing already determined upon, and without taking any notice of the necessity of the previous arrangement for Lord W[estmoreland]".[1] This demand led to further communications on the subject, and it was only then that Pitt and Grenville, as the latter assures us, found themselves "apprised of all the difficulties of the subject, and of the extent of the misunderstanding which prevailed respecting it."[2]

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[1] See the letter in *Grattan's Life*, iv., p. 173.

[2] Lord Fitzwilliam's wife was first cousin to William and George Ponsonby.

[3] *Beresford Correspondence*, ii., p. 35.

[4] The Ponsonbys were not only connected with Fitzwilliam, but they were relatives of the Duke of Portland (*Irish Debates*, xv., p. 189).

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[1] *Court and Cabinet of Geo. III.*, p. 301.

[2] *Ib.*, ii., p. 312.

When Pitt discovered that Fitzwilliam had consulted with many people from Ireland as if he were virtually Lord-Lieutenant, and had announced his policy without any previous concert with himself or his Cabinet, he was greatly embarrassed. On the one hand, irreparable mischief might be done by the dissolution of the present Government; on the other, to sacrifice the men who had supported Lord Buckingham on the great question of the Regency, would be dishonourable and degrading. Pitt never hesitated. "The system," wrote Pitt's friend and closest colleague, Grenville, "of introducing English party into Ireland, the principle of connecting changes of Government here with the removal of persons high in office there, and particularly the marking that system in the instance of a person of Fitzgibbon's situation, weight and character, are all so utterly irreconcilable with every view that I have of the state of that country, that I should really be inexcusable if I could make myself a party to such a measure, and in this opinion Pitt entirely concurs. On every principle, therefore, of duty and character, we are obliged to say that we cannot consent to this step, and we can only regret that, if it was originally intended, so capital a feature in the new arrangement was not brought forward earlier."[3]

Grattan was at this time in London. Pitt invited him to an interview, which took place on the 15th of October. We have but one account of this interview, and that is untrue. Up to this time, no reference whatever had been made to the Roman Catholic question; only vague intimations of a system of new men and measures. Yet the younger Grattan drags it in, and tells us that Pitt said respecting it "not to bring it forward as a Government measure, but if Government were pressed, to yield it". "This," he adds, "unquestionably was a concession of the Catholic question."[1] But Grattan himself knew nothing of this concession, for, twelve days later, he wrote to his friend McCan, "Had I anything to write, I should have written. At present, all I can say is that nothing is determined at present. Mr. Pitt don't agree to those extensive powers which we were taught to believe the Duke of Portland had. However, I should not be surprised if it were settled well at last, and that Lord Fitzwilliam went over: nor yet would the contrary surprise me."[2]

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[1] *Court and Cabinet of Geo. III.*, ii., p. 312. [2] *Ib.*

[3] Grenville to his brother Thomas, *Ib.*, p. 315.

Pitt was fully determined to risk the resignation of his new colleagues rather than act unjustly to his old supporters. On the day following his interview with Grattan, he wrote to Windham, the most respectable of the new accessions, "the more I consider every part of this unfortunate subject, the more I am confirmed on the impossibility, either of consenting to the Chancellor's removal, or of leaving either him or any of the supporters of Government exposed to the risk of the new system. . . . Besides the impossibility of sacrificing any supporters of Government, or exposing them to the risk of a new system, I ought to add, that the very idea of a *new system* [as far as I understand what is meant by that term], and especially one formed without previous communication or concert with the rest of the

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[1] *Grattan's Life*, iv., p. 177.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 178.

King's servants here, or with the friends of Government in Ireland, is in itself, what I feel it utterly impossible to accede to; and it appears to me to be directly contrary to the general principles on which our Union was formed and has hitherto subsisted."[1] At this time, Pitt wrote out one of those memorandums which he was in the habit of drawing up to fix his mind, or to be used if a discussion should arise. In this, he expresses his opinion that much the best event of the present discussions would be some arrangement which avoided Fitzwilliam's going to Ireland, but, if satisfaction were given on other points, it was now too late to negative it. Before he went, four things were indispensable: (1) a full disclaimer and relinquishment of a new system of measures or of new principles of Government in Ireland; (2) complete security that Lord Fitzgibbon and all the supporters of Government should not be displaced while they continue to act fairly in support of such a system as shall be approved here; (3) such a situation to be previously found for Lord Westmoreland as would show that he quitted Ireland with his own free consent; (4) an adequate provision for Douglas, then Chief Secretary, Ireland.[2]

On the other hand, the Duke of Portland and Lord Fitzwilliam had so far committed themselves to a complete change of policy in Ireland, that they believed they could not remain in Pitt's ministry unless allowed to carry it out. Happily, both parties were sincerely anxious to prevent the fatal consequence which might arise from a dissolution of the recent Union. Some explanations and interviews took place, from which it appeared that Fitzwilliam had in fact intended to remove Fitzgibbon and introduce a change of system in Ireland. After much discussion on the subject of Fitzgibbon's removal, that idea was renounced, "and the most explicit assurances were given by Lord Fitzwilliam that he had not in view the establishment of any new system in Ireland, but that he was desirous of strengthening his Government by the accession of Mr. Ponsonby[1] and his friends and the support of Mr. Grattan". A mode of satisfying Lord Westmoreland being found at this time, and Fitzwilliam having renounced his idea of a new system, it was agreed that a meeting should be held at Pitt's house at which the remaining points respecting Ireland should be discussed, so that no further delay might arise to the appointment of Fitzwilliam. The Duke of Portland, Lord Spencer, Mr. Windham, Lord Fitzwilliam, Lord Grenville, and Pitt attended the meeting. The points which were discussed, and the conclusions adopted were as follows:—

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[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii., p. 289.

[2] *Ib.*, 290.

1. The appointment of a Provost.

2. William Ponsonby was proposed by Fitzwilliam for the office of Secretary of State. Several objections were made to such an appointment. In answer to these objections, Fitzwilliam "strongly urged the necessity of his bringing forward William Ponsonby, for whom[2] [he said], there was no other opening". It was suggested to Fitzwilliam that Ponsonby might be made Keeper of the Signet, and the office of Secretary of State annexed to that of Chief Secretary. After much discussion this arrangement was agreed to by Fitzwilliam.

3. Lord Fitzwilliam proposed that George Ponsonby should be appointed Attorney-General. To this the strongest objections were made, *viz.*, the situation and merits of Wolfe, the claims of Toler, and the impropriety of advancing Ponsonby at once to such an office. An opinion was expressed that Wolfe might be appointed to

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[1] Mr. Ponsonby was William, George being the younger.

[2] In the original, to be mentioned a little farther on, the word is not "whom," but "which".

the first vacancy in one of the law courts; but no idea was intimated by Fitzwilliam of removing Wolfe against his inclination.

4. On the supposition that Wolfe was thus provided for, Fitzwilliam again proposed that George Ponsonby should be made Attorney-General, and urged that gentleman's unwillingness to serve under Toler. But the impropriety of making him at once Attorney-General was still objected. At last it was settled that Fitzwilliam should, in the first instance, endeavour to make a satisfactory arrangement for Toler, in order that Ponsonby might be appointed Solicitor-General under Wolfe; but it was at the same time distinctly agreed to by Fitzwilliam that Toler was not to be removed unless such a place was found for him as there was just reason to believe he would have accepted, if Lord Westmoreland had continued to be Lord-Lieutenant. At the meeting no mention was made of Curran.

Before the meeting took place, Fitzwilliam had suggested that some of the additional offices created by Lord Buckingham, particularly in the Revenue Boards, might be abolished. But he was informed by Pitt and Lord Grenville that they considered themselves parties to Buckingham's measures, and that they could not agree to any proposal which appeared to reflect on him. Lord Fitzwilliam introduced this question again at the meeting by stating that he thought such an arrangement might be made by the appointment of a Commission of Accounts as might diminish the number of the Revenue Commissioners without injuring any of the persons who sat at the Boards. However, it soon appeared that none of those present were sufficiently acquainted with the details of the subject, and it was agreed that after Lord Fitzwilliam's "explicit disavowal of all intention to introduce a new system or to countenance imputations on the former Government of Ireland, his colleagues would willingly leave it to him to consider the subject on such information as he might receive respecting it in Ireland, desiring only that, before any such measure was adopted, they might have the opportunity of deliberating upon it."

Nothing was said about the removal of Mr. Beresford, nor was his name mentioned by Fitzwilliam; though the different means of lessening the numbers of the Commissioners of Revenue formed part of his statement on this subject.

The conversation then turned to the course to be pursued respecting public measures; and it was "understood that on all important subjects, Lord Fitzwilliam should transmit all the information he could collect, with his opinion, to the King's servants here, and that he should do nothing to commit the King's Government in such cases without fresh instructions from hence. It is also distinctly recollected by some of the persons present, that the Catholic question was particularly mentioned, though not discussed at much length; that no decided sentiment was expressed by any one as to the line which it might be right ultimately to adopt: but that the same general principles before stated were considered as applying to this as well as to the other questions of importance, and that a strong opinion was stated that Lord Fitzwilliam should if possible prevent the agitation of the question at all during the present session."

At the close of the meeting, Fitzwilliam, who had brought with him a memorandum of matters to be considered, was repeatedly asked whether there were any other points to be discussed. The answer was, that he knew of none.[1]

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[1] Among the Pelham papers in the British Museum, *Papers relating to Ireland*, 1770-1796; *Additional MSS.*, 33, 118, fol. 268, there is a full

Lord Fitzwilliam was not sworn in before the King until the 10th of December, 1794.

No sooner was Fitzwilliam definitely appointed than Grattan posted to Ireland intent on schemes of his own—schemes which were to ruin his friend and patron Fitzwilliam, but which were kept secret from him. He arrived in Dublin about the 15th of December, and immediately collected the members of the Roman Catholic sub-committee, and urged them to press their claims, promising at the same time, that if they came forward now, they should have the support of Government.[1] A meeting of the Roman Catholics of Dublin was held on the 23rd of December, and there it was resolved to petition Parliament for "a total repeal of the penal and restrictive laws" still affecting them. A committee was appointed which published addresses to the Roman Catholics in the counties and great cities throughout the kingdom, and recommended them to prepare and transmit similar petitions.[2] A form of petition must also have been universally distributed, for all the petitions which arrived from the north, south, west and east, were in exactly the same terms.[3] Such was the speed with which these petitions were signed and collected, that they were ready for Fitzwilliam on his arrival, and were laid before him as the voice of the Roman Catholics of Ireland.[4]

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statement of the proceedings at the final meeting of the Ministers, when Fitzwilliam's instructions were explained to him. From internal evidence it must have been drawn up by the persons, excluding Fitzwilliam, who had attended the meeting, or by one of them authorised to speak for the others. It is dated March, 1795. From this indisputable authority the account given in the text is taken.

[1] *Irish Debates*, xv., p. 265; Lord Clare's Speech, 10th February, 1800; Duigenan's Answer to Grattan's Address, 1798. Debate on the Roman Catholic petition, in 1805, p. 323. This debate was published separately.

[2] Plowden, ii., p. 469, where the proceedings at the meeting are given.

[3] See these petitions, *Irish Debates*, xv., pp. 25-70.

[4] Fitzwilliam himself states, "by the time of my arrival, the petitions, which have been since laid before the House of Commons, were in complete readiness" (First Letter to Lord Carlisle).

Fitzwilliam arrived in Dublin on Sunday the 4th of January, 1795. The next day he spent in bed. On Wednesday the 7th, he summarily dismissed by a letter from his secretary, Mr. Beresford, Chief Commissioner of the Revenue, who was not under the Lord-Lieutenant at all, but was in the Treasury under Pitt. Beresford was a man of the highest character, who had served without reproach for twenty-five years, and he was now dismissed because "he was considered the King of Ireland".[1] On the same day, that is the 7th, he dismissed the Attorney- and Solicitor-General, but fortunately for them their dismissals required confirmation in England. His intention was to appoint his own connection George Ponsonby, Attorney-General, and to make Curran, whom Ponsonby desired to place in that situation, Solicitor-General.[2] Other dismissals followed immediately—Sackville Hamilton, Under-Secretary of State, after a service of nearly fifty years, and Cooke, Secretary of War. These two were dismissed, as Fitzwilliam tells us, because they had ceased to be clerks and had become Ministers. When Pitt heard of Beresford's dismissal, he at once declared that it was "an open breach of a most solemn promise".[3] It is to be observed that these dismissals violated the late Act[4] which provided that the pensions granted in any one year should not exceed £1,200. Yet in the face of this Act, Fitzwilliam proposed to grant £2,000 a year to Beresford; £1,200 a year to Cooke; and compensation to Sackville Hamilton for his loss of £1,200 a year. The cruelty of these arbitrary removals was not their only characteristic; they were carried out with an unfeeling arrogance unknown to British Ministers or Officials.

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[1] *Beresford Correspondence*, ii., p. 51. See the strong remarks of Lord Loughborough regarding this dismissal, and the way in which it was effected, in a letter to Grattan, dated 28th February, 1795 (*Grattan's Life*, iv., p. 198).

[2] This extraordinary double patronage is avowed by Fitzwilliam in his first letter.

[3] *Beresford Correspondence*, ii., p. 54.

[4] 33 Geo. III., c. 34, ss. 8, 9.

On the 8th of January, that is, three days after he rose from his bed, Fitzwilliam wrote to Portland that he "trembled about the Catholics, that he had great fears about keeping them quiet to the end of the session, that he found that the question was already in agitation, that a committee was appointed to bring forward a petition to Parliament praying for a repeal of all remaining restrictions," and that he had conversations on the subject "with some of the principal persons of the country," and that one of these had forcibly inculcated that the *principle of concession* was not only wise, but necessary to the public tranquillity.[1]

From what source could Lord Fitzwilliam have derived the information which induced him four days after his arrival in the country to write to the Home Secretary that he trembled about the Roman Catholics and had great fears about keeping them quiet even for the short space of a session, and that they would disturb the tranquillity of the country, that is, rebel, unless they obtained their desire? Assuredly not from the Roman Catholics themselves. Their numerous petitions had by this time arrived. They all contained the same humble prayer to Parliament, "that the House, taking the situation of the petitioners into consideration, their loyalty to their sovereign, their respect to the legislature, and dutiful and obedient submission to the laws, may be pleased to restore them to a full enjoyment of the blessings of our most excellent constitution, by a repeal of all the penal and restrictive laws now affecting the

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[1] Second letter.

Catholics of Ireland." A few days after he had sent his alarming letter of the 8th, Fitzwilliam received from the Roman Catholics of Dublin an address overflowing with assurances of their loyalty. In this, they declared their hope to manifest that their gratitude was commensurate with the benefits they had lately received; the address then proceeded, "We entreat your Excellency to receive our sincere professions of loyalty to our Sovereign, to whose paternal recommendation we feel so much indebted, and of inviolable attachment to the principles of our most excellent constitution, into whose bosom it is our utmost ambition to be admitted." In his reply to this address, Fitzwilliam declared, that from their loyalty to the King, their attachment to his person and Government, and from their submission and peaceable conduct under their restrictions, "there was every reason at this day to rely on them for fidelity and cordial allegiance".[1] It must have been from some private and secret source that Fitzwilliam received this disquieting information.

If we consider the position in which Fitzwilliam stood, and his surroundings, we can without difficulty discover this secret source. The new Viceroy had no knowledge or experience of Ireland. On the day he wrote his despatch of the 8th of January, four days had not elapsed since he came to the country. For acquaintance with its conditions and parties, he was wholly dependent on the men he had summoned to his Cabinet, *viz.*, Grattan as prime minister, the two Ponsonbys and Curran; and the despatch must be taken as representing the advice given him by these ministers. On Grattan his reliance was perfect, and he had even gone so far as to tell him that his own acceptance of the Lieutenancy of Ireland was the result of Grattan's decision.[1] The Ponsonbys were Fitzwilliam's kinsmen, and Curran was their creature. The despatches of a Viceroy are always drawn up with the advice and concert of his immediate Ministers. When Grattan read the statements in the despatch of the 8th, namely, that the Roman Catholic question was already in agitation, that a committee had been formed to petition Parliament, etc. etc.; did he inform Fitzwilliam that the agitation was all a sham contrived by himself, that not a single petition was spontaneous, and that without his own intrigues and promises the Roman Catholics would have remained quiet?[2] It is evident from Fitzwilliam's increasing alarm that neither Grattan nor the Ponsonbys told him one word of these things. If he was kept in ignorance of Grattan's proceedings before his own arrival, the unfortunate Viceroy was betrayed by the friend whom he trusted above all others, and by his kinsmen. Weak and faithless as Fitzwilliam was, it is impossible not to pity him. He really believed that, as he afterwards said, he had called to his councils persons in whom the public had confidence. In this he was greatly mistaken. Grattan had lost all influence with the Parliament and was thoroughly distrusted. The Ponsonbys had been the devoted tools of every administration, until they were turned out of office for their conduct at the time of the Regency question. Curran was justly regarded by all as a firebrand.[3] These men also led Fitzwilliam to believe that the Protestants universally approved of complete emancipation, a belief which was dispelled only two months after he had left the country, when Grattan's bill was rejected by 155 to 84.

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[1] The Address and Reply are to be found in Seward's *Collectanea Hibernica*, iii., pp. 122-125.

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[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv., p. 179.

[2] Transparent candour, says Mr. Lecky, was one of Grattan's most beautiful qualities, vii., p. 430.

[3] If Madden, the younger Tone, and Dr. MacNeven can be trusted, Curran was intimately connected with the United Irishmen, and acquainted with all their designs and proceedings. See MacNeven's statement, Madden's *United Irishmen*, iii., p. 241; Tone's *Life*, ii., p. 533; and the account of Curran's dining with Keogh and Robert Emmet (Madden, iii., p. 530).

A week after his despatch of the 8th of January, Fitzwilliam sent another, the conclusion of which may be given in his own words and italics: "I concluded by declaring, that I should not do my duty, if I did not distinctly state it as my opinion that not to grant cheerfully on the part of Government, ALL the Catholics wished for, would not only be exceedingly impolitic, but perhaps dangerous: that in doing this *no time was to be lost;* that the business would be *presently* at hand, and that the first step I took would be of infinite importance: that if *I received no very peremptory* instructions to the contrary, I should *acquiesce*, I meant—as well *in the time* as in the mode of proceeding and the *extent of the demands;* for, as a *measure* considered generally, I would conceive no necessity of waiting for any new instructions on which to decide; of this I reminded the S[ecretar]y of State, convinced I said as we all were of the necessity as well as fitness of the measure taking place at no distant period."[1] It is evident from his own statement, that Fitzwilliam did not explain to the Secretary of State what he himself meant by the word *acquiesce;* whether it referred to the time of granting emancipation, or the mode of doing so, or, what is most important, the extent of the concessions. The rule he laid down for himself, *viz.*, to consider the Secretary's silence as consent, may be a good rule among friends, but is totally inadmissible when great political changes are proposed. Lord Fitzwilliam was pressing a measure, which would have altered the whole constitution of Ireland; endangered the Protestant Establishment and the Acts of Settlement; thrown the whole power into the hands of the Roman

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[1] Fitzwilliam's Second Letter to Lord Carlisle.

Catholics; and created that monstrous and unworkable anomaly, a Protestant executive and a Roman Catholic Parliament, at a time when he was describing the country as disaffected and discontented; yet at the same time he was using the vaguest language, and informing the Secretary of State that he would proceed unless checked by very peremptory instructions. Subsequently to the two despatches of the 8th and 15th, he used still more alarming language. He told the Secretary that even deferring the question would "raise a flame in the country that nothing short of arms could be able to keep down," and that if the English Ministers did not grant the concessions, they must face "I had almost said, the *certainty* of driving this kingdom into a rebellion, and open another breach for ruin and destruction to break in upon us".[1]

It never occurred to Lord Fitzwilliam or his advisers that, even if he had gone over with full powers to grant emancipation, these alarming communications compelled the King's ministers to hold their hands and review the situation. They were told by the Viceroy that the Roman Catholics were determined to obtain all their demands, and that the only alternative was emancipation or rebellion. With these statements before them, it was the imperative duty of the British Ministers, before moving another step, to take into their consideration the statements made to them, and to exercise their judgment on them. Many all important questions required answers before they could consent to Fitzwilliam's proposals, such as: Is it a fact that the Roman Catholics have determined to rebel if they do not obtain all they desire, though they have not yet tried the effect of petitions to the Crown or to the legislature? Should we not cease to be a Government at all, if we yielded to intimidation? If the Roman Catholics threaten now when seeking power, what will they not do when they have attained it? Can we, while the kingdoms are separate, repeal, at the request of an Irish party, British statutes, which were passed to defend Protestantism in both countries? What security can be given for the Church Establishment, the present land settlement, and the safety of the Protestants exposed without defence to the attacks of their enemies? Are we prepared at this moment, when the empire is threatened by victorious enemies, to hazard a complete change in the Irish Constitution and the certain establishment of a Roman Catholic Parliament? How could such a Parliament work with a Protestant executive? These questions and innumerable others demanded full and satisfactory answers before the British Ministers could take one step in advance.

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[1] Second Letter, pp. 17 and 24.

The Irish Parliament met on the 22nd January, 1795. Grattan moved the Address. He declaimed against the French as the enemies of every Government, and wrought himself up to such a pitch of absurdity as to declare that the objects at stake in the war were "the creature and the Creator, man and the Godhead".[1] Duquerry, an associate of Grattan when in Opposition, moved an amendment in favour of a peace with France at the earliest opportunity. George Ponsonby, who now, after an interval of six years, sat with Grattan on the Treasury Bench, opposed the motion on the grounds that the war was just, and that it would be shameful to desert England when her existence was at stake. Grattan, when he uttered his profane rant, little thought that, before the next year was out, he would denounce the war which he now regarded as a crusade, and put this question to the House: "Can you conceive any situation more blasted than that of a cabal, whom the people of England and Ireland persist to tolerate as the Ministry, assuring their country that the enemy was exhausted, being on the eve of efforts on the part of that enemy exceeding anything before attempted by herself, or, in the same time, by any other nation—efforts which, probably, would not have been called forth but for their fatal perseverance in a desperate war, a perseverance the result of their falsehood, and a despair the result of their incapacity? I say, can you conceive anything more blasted than the situation of men making such assurances, etc., etc.?"[1] Nor did George Ponsonby foresee that he would, within an equally short period, argue in the same House that the salvation of Ireland depended on a peace with France.[2]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xv., p. 5.

On the 12th of February, Grattan moved for leave to bring in a bill for the relief of the Roman Catholics. Leave was granted, three only opposing the motion, it not being usual to oppose the introduction of a bill. But, as Lord Fitzwilliam's administration was now so near its end, we may turn to the proceedings in England.

There can scarcely be a doubt that the Duke of Portland withheld Fitzwilliam's despatches to himself from his colleagues in the Cabinet. From the time he had given up his desire of supplanting Dundas in the conduct of the war, he had taken it into his head that the sole management of Ireland had been entrusted to him. It is certain that both he and Lord Fitzwilliam had acted on this idea, and that they had published their determination to introduce a new system, involving changes of policy and persons, into Ireland without any previous concert with Pitt or the rest of the Cabinet.[1] The duke was a relation of the Ponsonbys, and naturally desired the adoption of his own policy and the advancement of his friends. On the 15th of January, Fitzwilliam had written to the duke that, if he received no peremptory instructions to the contrary, he would acquiesce in the demands of the Roman Catholics. This letter the duke ought certainly to have shown without delay to Pitt and the Cabinet. To this letter Fitzwilliam received no reply, though the duke wrote twice to him on other matters. About this time the duke took a step which almost proves that he was acting separately from his colleagues, and still hoping to have his own way. There was to be a meeting of the Cabinet on the 7th of February, and on the 5th he approached the King in order to discover his sentiments on an "extraordinary but serious proposal" he himself intended to lay before the Cabinet on the 7th.[2] The duke told the King that letters had been received from the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland proposing a total change in the administration of that country. The King was astonished to hear that Fitzwilliam, after a stay of three weeks in Ireland, had consented to a fresh resolution a short time after great indulgences had been extended to the Roman Catholics. The King did not argue with the duke, but sat down and wrote a memorandum, in which he told Pitt that he could not suddenly consent to the abandonment of principles which had been so long considered as wise, and on which the country had acted. "I cannot conclude," wrote the King, "without expressing that the subject is beyond the decision of any Cabinet of Ministers—that, could they form an opinion in favour of such a measure, it would be highly dangerous, without previous concert with the leading men of every order in the State, to send any encouragement to the Lord-Lieutenant on this subject, and if received with the same suspicion I do, I am certain it would be safer even to change the new administration in Ireland, if its continuance depends on the success of this proposal, than to prolong its existence on grounds that must sooner or later ruin one, if not both, kingdoms".[1]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvii., p. 8. A member thus expressed his astonishment at the sudden change of Grattan. "I confess, sir, I was never more surprised in my life than at hearing the right hon. gentleman declaim this night so warmly as he has done against the war with France, when, in the very last session, he told us that that nation was making war at once against God and man, the Creator and the creature" (*Ib.*, p. 20).

[2] *Ib.*, pp. 177, 201.

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[1] Lord Grenville to his brother, Thomas, *Court and Cabinet of George III.*, ii., p. 312.

[2] Letter of the King to Pitt, 6th of February, Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii., Append., p. 22. This extraordinary proposal must have been the adoption of Fitzwilliam's policy.

Wiser words were never written. There were infinite difficulties to be overcome before a British Cabinet could advise the sovereign to consent to an Irish Act admitting Roman Catholics to sit in Parliament while the kingdoms were separate. One only shall be mentioned here. An English statute[2] enacted that no peer of Ireland, nor any member of the Irish Commons, should be capable of sitting or voting during a debate in either House until he had first taken and subscribed the oaths of allegiance and abjuration, and also a declaration against transubstantiation and the invocation and adoration of the Virgin Mary. These provisions excluded Roman Catholics from both Houses of the Irish Parliament. It is manifest that, as long as this Act remained on the Statute Book, no English sovereign would or could give his assent to an Irish Act repealing a statute of the Imperial Parliament. Until the Parliament of Great Britain repealed its statute, no Roman Catholic could be admitted into the Irish Houses.

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[1] The King wrote this "rough paper," as he calls it, on the information received from the duke. It is to be found in the Appendix to Stanhope's second volume, p. 23.

[2] 3 Will. and Mary, c. 2, s. 5, Eng. See also Anne, st. 2, c. 17, ss. 9, 10, 11, English.

The meeting of the Cabinet took place on the 7th of February, and on the 8th, the Duke of Portland wrote to Fitzwilliam, cautioning him against committing himself on the Roman Catholic question by engagements or even by encouraging language, and reminding him of the necessity of enabling the King's Ministers to form a judgment as to the policy and safety of the measure. In this letter, the duke told Fitzwilliam that the deferring of the measure was not only to be desired for the present, but would be "the means of doing a greater service to the British Empire than it had been capable of receiving since the revolution, or at least since the Union".[1] On the 9th, Pitt wrote to Fitzwilliam, and told him that by dismissing Beresford he had broken his engagement with himself, and that he had acted inconsistently with that principle by which alone the full advantage of the union of parties which had taken place in England could be extended to Ireland.[2] The end of the matter was that a Cabinet Council was held on the 19th of February, and it was unanimously determined to recall Fitzwilliam "as a measure for the preservation of the empire".[3] Portland, Lord Spencer and Windham concurred in this resolution—a sure proof that, in their opinion, Fitzwilliam was rightly recalled.

The final despatch of Pitt was in a private letter. On receiving it, Fitzwilliam summoned the Chancellor, and informed him of his resolution to resign and return to England in a few days.[4] This was on the 25th of February, but he lingered on until the 25th of March. Two days before he actually left, he sent a notice to the *Gazette*, that he intended to hold a levée on the 25th, and immediately after it to embark. This notice, which the officer of the household entrusted with it had communicated to several persons, created great alarm, and he returned to the Viceroy to beg he would not send it. The Bishop of Ossory, who had been private secretary to Fitzwilliam, happened to be present, and he also concurred in thinking it imprudent: but Grattan and the Duke of Leinster spoke to Fitzwilliam apart, and the officer then received positive orders to take the message, which, however, he requested to have in writing. The Chancellor pressed Fitzwilliam to leave privately, and told him he knew that a Liberty[1] mob was prepared to accompany him, but the only answer he got was, "all that is very disagreeable, but how can I help it?" Lord Dillon remonstrated with the Bishop of Ossory on the impropriety of Fitzwilliam subjecting the city to the chance of a riot; the bishop agreed with him, and told him that "upon deliberation his Excellency's friends were of opinion, if it took place, it could not be laid at his door". Fitzwilliam even refused the Chancellor's request that he would send a message to Parliament desiring an adjournment, until the Chancellor declared that, if he did not send the message,[2] he would refuse to accept the Government as one of the Lords Justices. Later in the day, the Chief Secretary,[3] who appears to have been a man of sense, interfered, and a message was sent to the printer of the *Gazette* to stop the notice, but it was then too late.[4]

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[1] This was one of the two sentences from Fitzwilliam's letter to Lord Carlisle, which were quoted at a meeting of Roman Catholics of Dublin on the 9th April in this year, as showing that the idea of a legislative union was working in the mind of Pitt.

[2] Fitzwilliam's second letter, p. 23.

[3] *Court and Cabinet of Geo. III.*, ii., p. 333.

[4] *Beresford Correspondence*, ii., p. 73; Stanhope's *Pitt*, ii., p. 307.

Fitzwilliam had spent the interval between his recall and his departure in composing his two letters to Lord

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[1] The Liberty was to Dublin what St. Antoine was to Paris.

[2] The message was sent, and the Commons adjourned to the 13th of April (*Irish Debates*, xv., p. 154).

[3] Lord Milton, afterwards Earl of Dorchester.

[4] Marcus Beresford to his father, *Beresford Correspondence*, ii., p. 84.

Carlisle. These letters contained many untrue charges against the Cabinet and particularly against Pitt, and scandalous accusations against a high officer of unblemished reputation, for which there was no ground, and for which the writer afterwards apologised. They disclosed to the public important passages from private and confidential despatches; and told the Roman Catholics, whom a few days before he had described as on the brink of rebellion, that they were irresistible, and that they must succeed in obtaining a measure which had been unanimously condemned by the Cabinet of the empire. Finally, to crown all, he himself, whilst actually Lord-Lieutenant, distributed many copies of these letters.[1]

From his friend, whom he had asked to disperse his letters, Fitzwilliam received no sympathy. Lord Carlisle refused to be the channel of censure on the King's Ministers or on private individuals; told him that it was generally believed that at Fitzwilliam's final interview with those Ministers it was settled "that no material measures either as to persons or things was to be decided upon without further communication and concurrence with the Cabinet;" assured him that Beresford and the others he had dismissed had served the Government with fidelity, honesty and ability; rallied him on the absurdity of his statement that the Beresfords were too powerful for a Lord Lieutenant; justified Pitt in supporting those public servants on whose conduct no blame had attached; and censured him for appealing to the public when no attack had been made on himself. Finally, to mark his dissent from every thing done or said by Fitzwilliam, Lord Carlisle enclosed a copy of this letter to Mr. Beresford on the same day he sent it to Fitzwilliam.[2]

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[1] *Beresford Correspondence*, ii., pp. 88, 89.

[2] Lord Carlisle to Mr. Beresford, *Beresford Correspondence*, ii., p. 93.

Fitzwilliam's letters were well suited to disturb the peace of a city noted in the past for serious riots, but in this respect they were far surpassed by a production of his friend and premier, Grattan. At the end of February, the Roman Catholics of Dublin presented Grattan with a complimentary address, to which he immediately published an answer, which was perhaps the most seditious document that had appeared in Ireland since the revolution. A short time before, Grattan had declared that the war with France was a war with the enemy of mankind, yet now, while the empire was still engaged in the war, he issued a mad incitement to insurrection. Some paragraphs of this production will enable us to judge of its dangerous tendencies.

" Your emancipation will pass ; rely on it, your emancipation must pass ; it may be death to one Viceroy, it will be the peace-offering of another ; and the laurel may be torn from the dead brow of one governor to be craftily converted into the olive for his successor.

" Let me advise you by no means to postpone the consideration of your fortunes till after the war ; rather let Britain receive the benefit of your zeal during the exigency which demands it, and you yourselves, while you are fighting to preserve the blessing of a Constitution, have really and *bonâ fide* those blessings.

" My wish is that you should be free now ; there is no other policy which is not low and little ; *let us at once instantly embrace, and greatly emancipate.*

" I conceive the continuance of Lord Fitzwilliam as necessary for the prosperity of this kingdom . . . if he is to retire, I condole with my country. For myself, the pangs on that occasion I should feel on rendering up my small portion of ministerial breath,[1] would be little, *were it*

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[1] It must be remembered that when this answer was published Fitzwilliam was still Lord-Lieutenant.

not for the gloomy prospects afforded by those dreadful guardians which are likely to succeed. I tremble at the return to power of your old taskmasters ; that combination which galled the country with its tyranny, insulted her by its manners, exhausted her by its rapacity, and slandered her by its malice. Should such a combination, once inflamed as it must be now by the favour of the British court, and by the reprobation of the Irish people, return to power, *I have no hesitation to say that they will extinguish Ireland*, or Ireland must remove them. It is not your case only, but that of the nation. I find the country already committed in the struggle; I beg to be committed along with her and to abide the issues of her fortune."[1]

We may well ask: what was the plain English of this answer, which was addressed, not to a club or small body of educated men, but generally to the Roman Catholics of Dublin, who were at this time entirely under the influence of the United Irishmen. In October, 1791, before their fatal alliance with these traitors, the Roman Catholics of Dublin had declared that "they ought to advance their claims only when the empire was flourishing and tranquil." A few weeks before the publication of his answer, Grattan had asserted that the war with France was a war in which the creature and the Creator, man and the Godhead were at stake. Now, in the rage of disappointment he advised the Roman Catholics to press their claims in the mid-course of that war, even if their exertions should cost the life of a Viceroy. In what way must the disaffected, the fanatical, and the ignorant have understood the expressions, "dreadful guardians succeeding," "the old taskmasters returning," and their

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[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv., p. 217.

"tyranny," "insult," "rapacity," "slander" and "malice"? How must these classes have received the confident assurance: "They will extinguish Ireland, or Ireland must remove them?" The old taskmasters were those in power before Lord Fitzwilliam; and the dreadful guardians were those who were to succeed him; and these must be removed, or they would extinguish Ireland. The only conclusion to be drawn by these classes from this wild language was that, on the arrival of a new Viceroy, attended by the dreadful guardians and old taskmasters, "inflamed by the favour of the British Court," they ought to rise in a mass, under the leadership of Grattan, who was committed with them, and by one supreme effort free themselves from those he had pointed out as their rapacious and malicious tyrants. With Fitzwilliam's letters passing from hand to hand, and Grattan's answer rousing to madness the passions of the mob, we cannot wonder that on the day the successor to Fitzwilliam (Lord Camden) arrived in Dublin, *viz.*, the 31st of March—the month in which Grattan's answer had appeared—a very dangerous riot took place. The mob attempted to murder the Chancellor, and attacked the house of the Speaker. It then assailed the Custom House, and was only driven back by the troops, who fired and killed two men.

Two circumstances may be mentioned here—the one to illustrate the difficulties thrown in the way of the Government by that mischievous and contemptible body, the Whig Club; the other, as an example of the manner in which Irish history has been sacrificed to an ignoble hero-worship. A few days before Fitzwilliam left the country, the club published its unanimous thanks to Grattan for his manly, seasonable and constitutional answer to the Roman Catholics of Dublin, and their regret at the return to power of those who would re-establish the old system of violence and venality.[1] Mr. Lecky, speaking of Grattan's replies to the addresses presented to him at this time, tells us "they were eminently moderate, and evidently intended to maintain the Catholics in their allegiance".[2]

What were the aims which Grattan had in view when he so suddenly took up the emancipation of the Roman Catholics? His former career by no means entitled him to pose as their champion. At an early stage he had spoken against allowing them landed security for their money. In 1782, when his influence was great, he had joined Yelverton and Fitzgibbon in drawing the Act adopting the English statutes which excluded them from Parliament.[3] During the next eight years he did nothing for them. In 1791, he refused to present a very humble petition from them to Parliament. In 1792 the Act for their relief proceeded from the Government, as did the Act of the following year. In the session of 1794 he was silent; yet in 1795 we find him, in conjunction with the Ponsonbys and the members of the Whig Club, advocating their admission to Parliament. This new policy of the Whigs is very remarkable. From the time of the revolution down to the moment we are speaking of, the aristocracy of Ireland had manifested a great jealousy of the English or British Government. Their object always had been to obtain the uncontrolled management of their country, and at the same time to retain the protection of the more powerful partner without its interference. Such also was Grattan's policy. Hence their cry to stand or fall with England. A wise contemporary of the events of 1795 was inclined to believe that the present movement was an attempt of the aristocracy to gain the Roman Catholics, and by adding their strength and influence to their own, to control the Government and make the Irish Cabinet wholly independent of British councils.[1]

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[1] *Beresford Correspondence*, ii., p. 87; Plowden, ii., p. 511. On this occasion William Ponsonby was in the chair, and Conolly signed as secretary. Wolfe Tone has left us a portrait of the latter gentleman. "Conolly, a strange rambling fool, talked for nearly an hour without the least connection about a Union, the Regency, Mr. Fox, the Whig Club, the Catholics, a pension bill, a place bill, a Union, *da capo*, etc., etc., etc." (*Life*, i., p. 181). Mr. Lecky says that Conolly "was one of the most important members of the Irish House of Commons" (vii., p. 134).

[2] Vol. vii., p. 100.

[3] The Irish Act, 21 and 22 Geo. III., c. 48. This Act adopted all English and British laws relating to the taking of oaths, or making or subscribing declarations or affirmations.

On the 27th of February, while Fitzwilliam was still Lord-Lieutenant, the Roman Catholics of Dublin had resolved to send a deputation to London to present a petition to the King praying that Fitzwilliam might remain in Ireland. Keogh, Byrne and Hussey, with Wolfe Tone as their secretary, proceeded on this mission, but returned without effecting anything. On the 9th of the following April, a very numerous meeting of the Roman Catholics was held in Francis Street chapel to hear the report of the deputies. This meeting shows us how close and intimate was the union between the United Irishmen and the Roman Catholics of Dublin, who were, as Tone says, to the Roman Catholics of Ireland what Paris was to the Departments. John Sweetman, a United Irishman and afterwards member of the Leinster Directory, was chairman.[2] Richard M'Cormick, secretary of the Catholic Committee, a United Irishman, and member of the Directory, was the secretary.[3] The first speaker was Keogh, a United Irishman, who six weeks later, with M'Cormick, pressed Wolfe Tone to go to France and seek aid there for the intended rebellion.[4] The next speaker was Dr. MacNeven, a United Irishman and a member of the Directory in 1796, who in 1797 was despatched on a special mission to hasten the arrival of the French.[1] To MacNeven, Dr. Ryan succeeded, who was a member of the Roman Catholic sub-committee ; this gentleman died soon after this meeting. The next speaker merely moved a vote of thanks to a body of University students who had entered and taken a part in the proceedings. After him came Lewins or Lewines, a United Irishman, who was implicated in the treason of Jackson, and was sent to France in 1797 as the accredited agent of the Leinster Directory of the United Irishmen.[2] The spirit of the speeches delivered by these gentlemen may easily be guessed.[3] Even Edmund Burke, whose extreme partiality to the Roman Catholics blinded him to all their faults and to the danger of opening the Parliament to them before the Legislative Union, declared that their "tone was wholly Jacobinical" and "the language of the day went plainly to a separation of the two kingdoms."[4]

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[1] Knox, *Political Essays.*

[2] Madden, iv., p. 94.

[3] *Ib.*, i., p. 283.

[4] *Ib.*, ii., p. 27.

The effects of Lord Fitzwilliam's recall have been enormously exaggerated. If Grattan had not stirred up the Roman Catholics before his arrival—if Fitzwilliam had not published in Dublin his two angry letters—if his Prime Minister had not issued his incendiary address—the Roman Catholics of Dublin would have remained as quiet as they had been all through the year 1794. The most important effect of his recall was to restore confidence and courage to both Houses of Parliament, and to allay their fears that Great Britain had deserted them. Mr. Lecky indeed informs us that the "recall of Lord Fitzwilliam may be justly regarded as a fatal turning point in Irish history". Unfortunately for the value of this opinion, he had told us in a former volume, when the Volunteers Reform Bill, presented by Flood, was rejected, that "the rebellion of 1798 might be already foreseen."[1]

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[1] Madden, ii., p. 391.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 81.

[3] *Orations delivered at a meeting of the Roman Catholics of Dublin*, 1795. While Keogh was speaking at this meeting, a number of University students, among whom was Tom Moore, entered the chapel. The question of a legislative union had been raised and execrated. Moore made an impassioned speech, the end of which resembled Hector's prayer in the sixth book of the Iliad: "One boon I ask of Heaven for myself: may death arrest me ere I see the day a union takes place; for Ireland, may the Atlantic close and bury it for ever in an immeasurable gulf". Moore, at this time, was of the ripe age of sixteen.

[4] Letter to the Rev. Dr. Hussey, 18th April, 1795.

[1] Vol. vi., p. 347.

CHAPTER XXII.

GRATTAN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIEF BILL—CONNECTION OF THE DEFENDERS WITH THE UNITED IRISHMEN AND THE CATHOLIC COMMITTEE—CONSPIRACIES AND DISAFFECTION IN THE COUNTRY.

The Irish Parliament re-assembled on the 13th of April, 1795—a fortnight after the arrival of Lord Camden. On the 21st, Grattan moved for a committee to inquire into the state of the nation. In his opening speech, he stated that he had learned "from persons in whom he could not but confide" that the instructions to Lord Fitzwilliam on the Catholic question were, that, if the Catholics insisted to "carry forward their bill, the Government should give it a handsome support". This is a very different statement from that of his son, who tells us that Pitt used the following words to his father, "not to bring it forward as a Government measure, but if Government were pressed to yield it". During his speech, Grattan gave an enumeration of the measures his administration had intended to introduce, but, as a United Irishman deplored, there was "not a word of reform in Parliament, of a repeal of the Convention Bill, or of a mitigation of the strong measures by which the former administration had coerced the people".[1] It soon appeared that the object of the motion was to inquire why Fitzwilliam had been recalled. In other words, the motion questioned the power of the King to dismiss his servants without assigning cause; though his Viceroy had very lately exercised that power in numerous instances with the assent of Grattan. A debate ensued, in which Grattan was obliged to hear many disagreeable comments on his conduct. He was told, that for the sake of his own character he ought not to have proposed such an inquiry; that no man could be considered the friend of the Roman Catholics who printed and circulated passionate and imprudent publications and thus taught them to deserve disappointment: that it was the advisers of Fitzwilliam who had occasioned his recall; that the junta round Fitzwilliam were enemies to the country, and had endeavoured to carry their measures by deceiving both the Crown and the people; that no man could have taken a more effectual means to excite an insurrection than by circulating a paper of the most seditious and malignant tendency, which had lately been printed; that to counteract the mischievous effects of "advertisements for insurrection" which had lately appeared, nothing was left to moderate men but to rally round the throne and support the Government.[1] Grattan was greatly irritated by these criticisms. In his reply, he stated that he adhered to the answers he had given to the various addresses presented to him, and ended with a flourish, "I am here ready to meet inquiry. I am here to confront my enemies and stand by my country".

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[1] *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 97.

On the 4th of May, the second reading of Grattan's bill for the further relief of the Roman Catholics came on for discussion. At the time this bill was introduced, the Roman Catholics of Ireland were in a better situation than the Protestant Dissenters of England. The Test Acts had been abolished in their favour, except as to Parliament and about thirty of the highest executive offices. They had been granted everything but political power. Grattan's bill now proposed to do away with the remaining restrictions, and to admit them to Parliament and every office in the State without taking the oaths required from Protestants. By the Irish as well as by the British Constitution, the Crown was limited to members of the established religion. The necessary consequence of this limitation was that the immediate advisers and councillors of the Crown should belong to the same religion. It would be preposterous to compel the sovereign, on the pain of forfeiture, to be a member of the Established Church, and at the same time, to allow his Chancellor, his Prime Minister, and his Cabinet to be of a religion hostile to the Established Church. It was upon this principle that the Irish Act of 1793 had been drawn, namely, to grant to the Roman Catholics every private right possessed by the Protestants, but to exclude them from the councils of the Crown. No attention whatever was given to this consideration by Grattan and the Ponsonbys, nor to the question whether the sovereign could, without the approval of the Imperial Parliament, consent to an Irish Act repealing English and British statutes which had been passed for the security of the Church both in England and Ireland. Many other considerations of great importance were put aside, or had never occurred to the advocates of the bill, such as the security of the Protestants; the safety of the Established Church; the immediate and complete alteration in the Constitution of the country; whether such a change should be made in a time of war; and whether it would weaken the connection between the two kingdoms. Two mischievous clauses in the bill suggest the belief that its promoters did not expect it to pass, but brought it forward to embarrass the Government. One clause repealed the provision in the Act of 1793 which required a moderate and reasonable qualification for the possession of arms. The other enacted that Roman Catholic soldiers should have the free right of attending their own divine service.[1] The first would have armed the beggary of the kingdom. The second was wholly unnecessary, and must have been inserted to inflame the Roman Catholics.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xv., pp. 168-188.

One case only had ever happened at all resembling the violation of a Roman Catholic soldier's right of attending his own chapel, and that was so grossly exaggerated by Edmund Burke and the Irish agitators that it becomes necessary to relate it. It was the practice, when soldiers were quartered in towns, to parade them on Sunday and to march them to the church door. When arrived at the church, the Protestants entered, and the rest were dismissed generally with an admonition to repair to their own places of worship. On one occasion, Hyland, a trooper in a dragoon regiment, refused to attend the parade, saying that he was a Roman Catholic, and declined to march to the church door. He was told that it was a military duty to attend the parade, and that, after he had marched with the rest of the regiment to the door of the church, he had full liberty to go to his own chapel. He persisted in his disobedience and was flogged.[2] Even if this case had been as bad as was represented by Roman Catholic agitators,[3] a man of sense, who wished well to his country, would not have inserted in an Act of Parliament a memorial of Protestant bigotry, nor would he have consented to entrust arms to the dregs of the people, who were, throughout many districts in Ireland, plundering and burning the houses of Protestants, and murdering the inmates who resisted.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xv., pp. 208, 209.

[2] Duigenan's *Answer to Grattan*, p. 155.

[3] Dr. MacNeven, at the meeting of the Roman Catholics of Dublin on the 9th of April in this year, thus mentioned the calumny: "A great proportion of the army and navy consists of Irish Catholics. Why may not England be made to feel the efficiency of their inaction? How would the sufferings of poor Hyland, and the lash of military execution, suspended over conscience, recommend the service to our peasantry?". Dr. Hussey, who knew perfectly well from his own experience that Roman Catholic soldiers were not compelled to attend Protestant churches, in a pastoral published by him in 1797 declared that several instances of this kind had lately occurred in his diocese, but, when required to prove this charge, made no reply (Duigenan's *Answer to Grattan*, p. 157).

A patriot would have hesitated to bring forward a measure of transcendent importance at such a crisis, when the country was engaged in a war abroad, and distracted by widespread conspiracies and numerous local insurrections at home. A wise man would have seen the propriety of leaving a question which entailed far-reaching political consequences in the hands of a Government which had introduced the Relief Act of 1792, and carried the still greater Relief Act of 1793 against the will of the House of Commons.[1] The admission of the Roman Catholics to Parliament and the highest executive offices, or emancipation, as it was absurdly called, could not have been carried without a tremendous struggle, little short of a civil war, which would have convulsed the nation from end to end, and might have extended to England. If carried, it would have, at no very distant period, thrown the whole power of the State into the hands of a thoroughly disaffected community, and alienated the only loyal body in the kingdom —the members of the Established Church—who were the firm friends of the British connection. The Roman Catholics had lately shown what they could effect by their numbers and by combination. Under the guidance of their priests, and regardless of the opinions or fears of the Protestants, they had met in their chapels throughout the country and nominated delegates to a convention which was really a Roman Catholic Parliament. Their voting power had increased enormously since 1793; for no sooner had the elective franchise been granted to them than the landlords vied with each other in giving them freeholds in order to increase their own importance. If the Parliament had been opened to them, the same influence which had taught them to unite for the purpose of nominating delegates to the convention would have persuaded them to combine in order to return representatives of their own denomination, and the power of the landlords would have yielded to that of religion. Their overwhelming numbers would have enabled them to take immediate possession of the counties, and the open cities and towns, as Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Drogheda and Newry. The close or private boroughs would then have been the last defence of the Protestants.[1] The contest for the possession of these would have been keen and bitter; and, while it lasted, Ireland would have been divided into two hostile camps, and the wealth, peace and industry of the country would have been sacrificed to the strife of parties. But the final result would not have been long delayed. With the help of the English Opposition, and of the numerous treasonable societies in England and Scotland,[2] the Roman Catholics would have prevailed, and a Parliament with an enormous majority of that religion would have confronted a British sovereign bound by his coronation oath to maintain a Protestant Establishment.

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[1] See the speech of the Speaker in 1793, *Irish Debates*, xiii., pp. 332-345. Yet Mr. Lecky informs us that the dominant sentiment of the Irish Protestants was a desire for the emancipation of the Roman Catholics (vii., p. 100).

But these eventualities never occurred to Grattan, and his speech on this occasion proved that he of all men was the least fitted to handle such a momentous question. It consisted chiefly of abuse of the British Cabinet and the Irish Government. He told the former that their country had lost Holland, Brabant, a great part of Germany and the terror of the British name, and asked: would "they, after the loss of America, with an increase of debt in the last thirty years of above two hundred millions: with a new Republican empire rising upon them, dreadful from its principles, its power, its extent, and its victories," reject three millions of Irish; compared the Cabinet to the Carthaginian Senate, the members of which had borne the disgrace of their country and the loss of their armies with complacency, but when their cabal was touched or some tax proposed on themselves, trembled; "the Senate of Carthage," he repeated, "trembled; like the British Ministry, they were moved by nothing so much as by the least of their misfortunes". He accused the Irish Government of fomenting a religious war, and of attempting to divide the Roman Catholic democracy from its aristocracy, the people from its leaders and the flock from the clergy, and declared that "the Cabinet of England was the bar to the freedom of the Roman Catholics," and that the dispute was "no longer a question between the Protestant and Catholic, but between the British Minister and the Irish nation."

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[1] It must be remembered that at this time Protestant meant a member of the Established Church. The Presbyterians were always spoken of as Dissenters or Presbyterians.

[2] See the reports from the committees of secrecy of both Houses of the Imperial Parliament in 1794, *Parliamentary History*, xxxi., pp. 475 573, 688, 886.

During the debate, it had been argued by the opponents of the measure that the admission of the Roman Catholics to Parliament and the high offices of State would endanger the Connection, the Monarchy, the Church and the Parliament. The manner in which Grattan answered these objections illustrates his constant habit of substituting dogmatic assertions for arguments; "I beg to recur to the four heads of objection, the Connection, the Monarchy, the Church and the Parliament; and I beg leave to lay it down as absolutely and as broadly as language will permit —that these four objects are not endangered by Catholic emancipation, but on the contrary, that they cannot be saved without it;—that it is absolutely necessary in these times for the Connection, for the Monarchy, for the Church and for the Parliament, that their existence shall be rendered compatible with the privileges of the people."

When he attempted to deal with the difficulty arising from the Coronation oath, he was entirely out of his depth. His first argument was, that as the Act[1] settling the oath preceded by three years the Act[2] excluding Roman Catholics from Parliament, the oath could not refer to the subsequent law. But Grattan did not know that the Union Statute[3] had made additions to the Coronation oath, nor that the oath taken by George III. contained those additions. His second argument was that the king had taken the oath not in his legislative but in his executive capacity. This did not touch the difficulty, which was that the King at his coronation had contracted[4] with the British Parliament to observe all the laws which had been passed in that Assembly for the security of the Church in England and Ireland. Until he was freed from the obligation of that contract by the Parliament, the other party to it, he could not assent to an Irish Act repealing any of the laws he had sworn to observe.

Grattan's third argument was that the King had already broken the oath by consenting to the Irish Act of 1793, by the Canada Bill, and by the Constitution granted to Corsica. The instances of Canada and Corsica were totally inapplicable to the question under discussion. Canada had

[1] 1 Will. and Mary, c. 6.

[2] 3 Will. and Mary, c. 2.

[3] 5 Anne, c. 8.

[4] Blackstone lays it down that the coronation oath is a fundamental and express contract.

surrendered to the British arms on the express condition that her inhabitants should enjoy their laws and religion in the same manner they had done before their surrender. The Corsicans, when offering their crown to the British King, had stipulated for the liberty of framing their own laws and preserving the Roman Catholic religion.

In his speech Grattan made an assertion which was as true as his accusations of the Cabinet and of the Irish Government. During the debate, it had been urged as proof of the disloyalty of the Roman Catholics, that their Committee had employed Wolfe Tone as their secretary though he was implicated in the treason of Jackson. Grattan met this objection by boldly declaring that Tone was not their secretary when he held communication with Jackson. Every member of the Assembly Grattan was then addressing knew that this statement was untrue. The bill was rejected by 155 to 84.[1]

From this time the Opposition dwindled away to a mere shadow of a party. In 1796 it ranged from seven to nineteen. In 1797 several motions proceeding from it, as George Ponsonby's vote of censure, were negatived without a division. It rose from seven to forty-nine on the Absentee Tax question. Parliamentary reform was only supported by thirty. The Commons had taken to heart the lesson taught by the results which had followed from the Settlement of 1782 and their independence, namely, that they could not defend themselves against their internal enemies without the support of Great Britain.

In this session, the Chief Secretary introduced a bill for establishing and endowing an academy for the education of Roman Catholics exclusively.[2] This institution was afterwards known as the College of Maynooth. While the bill was passing through the House, a petition was presented by Grattan on behalf of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, strongly objecting to the foundation of an exclusive college. They urged that the appointment of professors and the admission of students should not be left to secret nomination, but should take place after a public examination, as in the University of Dublin; that the exclusion of Protestants would tend to perpetuate the line of separation between his Majesty's subjects; and that experience had shown the wisdom and utility of educating their youth with Protestants in the University of Dublin.[1] Dr. Hussey was the first president of this new seminary, and, on his removal to the Roman Catholic See of Waterford in 1797, published a most seditious pastoral letter to the clergy of the united dioceses of Waterford and Lismore.[2]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xv., p. 365.

[2] 35 Geo. III., c. 21.

A few days before the end of the session, Curran, after a long and inflammatory speech, moved that an address should be presented to the King, condemning the conduct of his Cabinet, and imploring him "to lay his commands upon his Ministers to second the zeal of his Irish Parliament in his Majesty's service, by manifesting in future to the people of Ireland due regard and attention." Grattan seconded the motion. It was rejected by the adjournment of the House, which was carried without a division.[3]

In December of this year, and in the beginning of 1796, several trials of Defenders took place in Dublin. From the evidence given in these cases it appeared that Defenderism was very prevalent in the capital, chiefly among servants, apprentice boys and workmen. The members of the association were sworn to assist a French invasion, to dethrone all Kings, and to obey implicitly their own superior officers and committee men. Their oath was so framed that, while it bound the party taking it to the commission of the most atrocious crimes, it appeared to be merely an oath of allegiance and of submission to the laws. It commenced with the words, "I do swear to be true to his Majesty King George the Third whilst I live under the same Government." This statement of allegiance was repeated in another part of the oath: "I will subject myself to my committee men in all lawful proceedings, and not otherwise during the reign of his Majesty King George the Third whilst I live under the same Government." Lawful proceedings meant proceedings according to their own law. At the time they took this oath, they were also sworn to a catechism or profession of their objects, which proved their treasonable designs and explained the oath.[1]

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[1] For this petition, see *Irish Debates*, xv., pp. 201-3.

[2] This pastoral is to be found in Plowden's Append. cix., and in Musgrave, ii., Append., p. 170.

[3] *Irish Debates*, xv., pp. 389-399.

While these trials were proceeding in Dublin, the state of the country was dreadful. The Roman Catholic peasantry in Ulster, Leinster and Connaught, were engaged in the conspiracy of the Defenders. On this point, the opinions of Wolfe Tone and of the Attorney-General, afterwards Lord Kilwarden, agree in a remarkable manner. Tone, writing on the 22nd of February, 1796, asserted: "The fact is, that in June last [1795] it embraced the whole peasantry of the provinces of Ulster, Leinster and Connaught —three-fourths of the nation; and I have little doubt but it has since extended into Munster—the remaining province. These men, who are called Defenders, are completely organised on a military plan, divided according to their respective districts, and officered by men chosen by themselves; the principle of their union is implicit obedience to the orders of those whom they have elected for their generals, and whose object is the emancipation of their country, the subversion of English usurpation, and the bettering the condition of the wretched peasantry of Ireland. The eyes of this whole body, which may be said almost without a figure to be the people of Ireland, are turned with the most anxious expectation to France for assistance and support ".[1] Two months before these words were written, the Attorney-General, on the trial of one of the Dublin Defenders, declared, " I have seen circumstances proved in the most distant parts of the West, corresponding with circumstances arising in the distant parts of the North and East, manifesting most clearly that there was a united scheme to subvert the religion and the government of the country by exciting sedition among the lower orders of the people. How these schemes were set on foot so universally, whether by French gold or democratic clubs, is neither for you, gentlemen, nor me now to inquire. . . . Further, to forward this plan, they have levied money from the poor wretches they seduced ; a man sworn pays a shilling to the person administering the oath. . . . In fact the practice became common, and they spoke of a committee man in a village as they would of a shoemaker. 'Where are you going ?' 'To the Defender-maker'—And to the Defender-maker the person paid a shilling, as if he had obtained something valuable ".[2]

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[1] The trials of the Dublin Defenders are given in *State Trials*, xxvi., pp. 226-462.

Nor did this great and wide-spread conspiracy stand alone. At this time, the Defenders were merged into the United Irishmen, and there was no distinction between them.[3] The Defenders were also encouraged and directed by the Roman Catholic Committee. As early as 1793, the report of the Lords' secret committee stated that the Roman Catholic Committee was in communication with the

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[1] Tone's *Life*, ii., p. 188.

[2] *State Trials*, xxvi., p. 246.

[3] Madden, i., p. 115.

Defenders, and in proof published a letter, the authenticity of which was never denied, dated August, 1792, and written by Sweetman, secretary of the Committee. This letter was directed to a person in Dundalk as to whether the offences, of which the Defenders there in confinement were accused, were bailable. To this charge, the sub-committee, on behalf of the General Committee of the Roman Catholics, published a defence drawn up by Wolfe Tone.[1] This defence was artful but eminently unsatisfactory, and passed over two facts which appeared from the letter (1) that the correspondence regarding the offences of the Defenders had been begun by the committee, and (2) that the correspondence referred not to a single individual as alleged by the defence, but to all the accused. Lying is so necessary to the purposes of a conspiracy that it is folly to expect the truth from its members. Three years later, the man, who had drawn up the false defence, described the exact relation which connected the Defenders with the United Irishmen and the Roman Catholic Committee :—

"I have now stated the three modes of organisation which exist in Ireland—

1. The Dissenters, with some of the most spirited and enlightened of the Catholics, under the name of United Irishmen, whose central point is Belfast, the capital of Ulster.

2. The Defenders, forming the great body of the Catholic peasantry, amounting to three millions of people, and who cover the entire face of the country.

3. The General Committee of the Catholics, representing the talent and property of that body, possessing a very great influence everywhere in Ireland, and especially deciding the movements of the capital. I hazard nothing in

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[1] *Life of Tone*, i., p. 475.

asserting that these three bodies are alike animated with an ardent desire for the independence of Ireland, an abhorrence of British tyranny, and a sincere attachment to the cause of the French Republic ; and, what is of very great consequence, they have a perfect good understanding and communication with each other [that is to say, their leaders] so that, on any great emergency, there would be no possible doubt of their mutual co-operation. Many of the most active members of the General Committee, for example, are also in the clubs of the United Irishmen ; many of the officers of the Defenders, particularly those at the head of their affairs, are also either members of those clubs, or in unreserved confidence and communication with those who regulate and guide them. The central point of all this is undoubtedly Belfast, which influences, and which deserves to influence, the measures of all the others, and what I consider as extremely singular, the leaders of the Defenders in Ulster, who are all Catholics, are in more regular habits of communication, and are more determined by the Dissenters of Belfast, than by their Catholic brethren of Dublin, with whom they hold much less intercourse ".[1]

The miserable condition of the kingdom was the direct result of the so called glorious Settlement of 1782. For ninety years the aristocracy and gentry of Ireland had desired to obtain the government of the country, and the patronage and emoluments connected with it, free from the control of the British Government. Taking advantage of the difficulties of Great Britain at a time when they ought to have joined heart and hand in defence of their only protector, they advanced their claim to independence under the false pretence that it was a national movement. To assist them in obtaining their desire, they had raised, clothed, and regimented the men of the North, the majority of whom were Presbyterians strongly inclined to Republicanism and hostile to an aristocracy and the Church Establishment. The Settlement of 1782 satisfied the Episcopalians and their leaders, but it was only a step to the active portion of the Presbyterians who filled the ranks of the volunteers. These had long listened to parliamentary orators appealing to them as the "armed majesty of the people" and perorating on the indefeasible birth-rights of Irishmen, and had interpreted the inflammatory rant according to their own wishes and ideas. They were not content with a Settlement which transferred the whole power of the kingdom to a Parliament in which bishops sat, which was largely controlled by an aristocracy, and which had so long denied them their rights as citizens. They soon disclosed their aims. Disclaiming to petition a Parliament which they hated, and confident of their armed strength, they called a Parliament of their own. On the 8th of September, 1783, that is, eight months after Great Britain had renounced all legislative authority over Ireland, delegates of 272 companies of the Ulster volunteers met at Dungannon and declared for annual elections and universal suffrage.[1] From Dungannon, the delegates issued an address to the "Volunteer armies of Munster, Leinster and Connaught," calling upon them to meet in a Grand National Convention to be held in the capital. The volunteers of the other provinces answered the call, and a convention, representing the whole armed people of Ireland, assembled at the same time with a new Parliament, to discuss a question which had never been considered by any Irish House of Commons. Fortunately, the convention broke down, but the Presbyterians, who had called it into existence, immediately resumed their agitation for a reform which was inconsistent with the existing Constitution. Feeling their inability to accomplish the revolution they desired by their own strength, they resolved to form a close alliance with the Roman Catholics, offering them the elective franchise and emancipation in return for reform. This unnatural alliance gave rise to the United Irishmen, who from the first were pledged to annual elections, every man a voter, and every man capable of being elected. These agitators laboured incessantly and indefatigably to corrupt the minds of the people, and to inspire them with new notions of Government, new models of Constitution and new conditions of obedience. No expedient which cunning could suggest escaped them. Democratic songs, creeds and plans of reform were disseminated by them among the peasantry, and made their way into their cottages. Their agents were to be found in the fairs, markets and whisky shops throughout the country, promising the abolition of tithes, and the distribution among the peasantry of the lands and wealth now monopolised by a few. From the passions excited to action by these apostles of anarchy sprang the Defenders, who very soon merged into the United Irishmen, and could not be distinguished from them.

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[1] Tone's *Life*, ii., p. 190.

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[1] "Resolved unanimously, that by the ancient constitution of Parliaments, elections of representatives were for centuries annual, and in many instances more frequent; and the exercise of suffrage among freemen universal." "Resolved unanimously, that every approach to those fundamental principles tends to a renovation of, not to an innovation in, the Constitution" (*Belfast Politics*, p. 234).

Neither French gold nor French agents were wanting to increase the distraction and confusion which prevailed in the unhappy country. We now know that French agitators were in the kingdom in 1793 or earlier, and that demands and offers of assistance had passed between the Government of France and the disaffected Irish long before this year of 1795. In September, 1793, at a meeting in Paris of the Committee of Public Safety,[1] it was stated that the agents employed to foment troubles in Ireland were capable and trustworthy, and, if their success did not answer the expense, it was owing to the watchfulness and energy of the Irish Government. In November of the same year the Committee and the Ministers of the day resolved to employ a large portion of the money arising from the spoils of the Church and the landed proprietors in exciting insurrections among the nations, and especially in Ireland.[2] Hamilton Rowan in his autobiography informs us that in 1791 or 1792 an offer was sent from the French Convention, directed "to the popular leaders in Ireland," to deposit in any bank in Europe the pay for 40,000 men for six months, on the condition that they would declare Ireland independent of England.[3] Another United Irishman says, that in the summer of 1793, after the Brissotins had declared war against England, they sent a confidential agent with offers of succour, provided Ireland would declare itself separate and independent. This agent arrived in Dublin with an introduction to Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and his offer was made known to Simon Butler, Bond, Rowan, Dr. Reynolds, and others.[4] Musgrave tells us that "in the years 1791 and 1792, Rabaud de St. Etienne, the bosom friend of Brissot, the famous leader of the Girondin party in the French National Assembly, passed some time between Dublin and Belfast, sowing the seeds of future combustion".[5] This information is very curiously corroborated. In 1794 a pamphlet or address of Camille Desmoulins was published, which stated that Rabaud St. Etienne had been in Ireland preaching French principles within the two previous years.[1] On the other hand, there were invitations sent from Ireland to France before 1793. Brissot, who was guillotined in that year, had published an address to his constituents, in which he reproached his former colleagues for delaying an invasion of Ireland after the repeated and anxious invitations of the Irish Republicans.[2] This address was translated by William Burke and published in London either at the end of 1793 or beginning of 1794. Its preface of forty pages was written by Edmund Burke.

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[1] A series of letters, or bulletins as they were called, from the secretary of the Committee of Nine or of Public Safety, reached Lord Grenville through Francis Drake, our Resident at Genoa. They are to be found in the second volume of the *Dropmore MSS.*, commencing at p. 456.

[2] *Ib.*, ii., p. 472.

[3] *Autobiography*, p. 161.

[4] *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 71.

[5] Vol. i., p. 108.

In truth, Ireland was in 1795 sick to death. Of her 5,000,000 of inhabitants a tenth only—namely, the Episcopalians—were loyal to the British Government and British Connection. The Presbyterians, as represented by the United Irishmen, were endeavouring to effect a revolution and establish a Republic.[3] Of the Roman Catholics, a very small number of their peers and gentry were content with their present situation and feared a revolution ; the middle classes were in strict alliance and co-operation with the United Irishmen ; the poorer classes, driven mad by misery and religious rancour, were ripe for a war of extermination, It was blind folly on the part of Grattan to imagine that a reform would satisfy the United Irishmen, or that Emancipation would lay the revolutionary spirit which prevailed among the Roman Catholics. Nothing would have satisfied the United Irishmen but a democratic House of Commons and the abolition of the House of Lords, as MacNeven deposed on oath.[4] "I believe," said Thomas A. Emmet,

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[1] *Charlemont Correspondence, etc.*, ii., p. 237.

[2] *Irish Debates*, xvii., p. 196 ; *Charlemont Correspondence, etc.*, ii., p. 230.

[3] "Ques.—What was the object of the [united] system ? Ans.—To effect a revolution and establish a Republic" (Evidence of Dr. MacNeven).

[4] "Ques.—What was the reform originally required by United Irishmen ? Ans.—A democratic House of Commons ; they thought one aristocratic body in the State sufficient" (Evidence of Dr. MacNeven).

"that the mass of the people do not care a feather for Catholic emancipation, neither did they care for parliamentary reform till it was explained to them as leading to other objects which they looked to, principally the abolition of tithes. . . . The people were also taught to consider that when they became members of a democracy their condition would be bettered."[1] This evidence, coming from leading members of the body which had been working for years to excite a rebellion and had tried every expedient to attain that object, is very valuable. If it was folly to think that these powerless palliatives were sufficient to allay the ferment in the kingdom, it was madness to urge their acceptance on the Parliament. Nothing was more inflammatory, or gave greater encouragement to agitators, than to point out evils without suggesting adequate remedies. By airing imaginary grievances, and making untrue accusations against the Government in times of danger, when the preservation of their country alone occupied the minds of all reasonable men, Grattan gave an opportunity to every factious man in the country to offer his wild speculations, and this kept alive an agitation which it was so necessary to assuage.

What Ireland wanted was a strong Government and stern laws to put an end to the murders, nightly burnings, and conspiracies to murder, which were terrorising the kingdom. The first and most inexorable duty of a Government is to protect the lives and properties of its subjects, and this duty must be fulfilled at every cost. When the laws, formed for the regulation of quiet times, are inadequate to restrain wide-spread and fully organised systems of crime, new laws and expedients commensurate with the mischief must be resorted to. No law or expedient that is necessary for the protection of life and property can be too severe. To object that the new measures are contrary to the Constitution is absurd. The Constitution of a nation is not an exact and perfect standard laid up somewhere as a model and limit of our actions, but is an imperfect attempt of the people of the nation to form rules for their daily life, and is therefore for ever varying with the necessities and exigencies of the times. When it fails in its primary duty of protection, additions must be made to it; for without security of life and property, there is neither Constitution, nor liberty, nor civil society. No country ever required the swift punishment of traitors and conspirators more than Ireland did in the year 1795. In May of this year, the organisation, by which the Directory of the United Irishmen was enabled to levy a revolutionary army, was completed in the province of Ulster.[1] Throughout the three provinces of Ulster, Leinster and Connaught, there was also a regular conspiracy to defeat the administration of justice and to deter or murder witnesses or jurors who venture to do their duty. In Connaught, "the spirit of insurgency," as a member declared in Parliament, "was not that of a private or a mere constructive nature, but showed itself in open rebellion; bodies of insurgents marched in array through the country and offered battle to the king's troops".[2] In the summer of 1795, Lord Carhampton was sent down with an armed force to quell the insurrection in the West. He arrived "at a time when Defenderism and Treason stalked abroad by day, and plunder and massacre were the orders of the night".[3] In co-operation with the magistrates, he arrested many who had been sworn against as Defenders, brought them before a bench of magistrates, and sent them to serve on board the fleet, if deemed guilty. By the adoption of this summary and necessary process, he restored peace and tranquillity to the province without bloodshed. This lesson had most important consequences; it kept Connaught quiet during the rebellion of 1798, until the landing of a French force in Killala Bay on the 22nd of August in the same year.

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[1] Evidence of Thomas Addis Emmet. The evidence of MacNeven and Emmet is given in the Appendix to the Report of the Lords' Secret Committee, 1798.

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[1] Report of the Lords' Secret Committee, 1798.

[2] *Irish Debates*, xvi., p. 43.

[3] *Ib.*, p. 46.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GRATTAN'S SEDITIOUS SPEECHES—INSURRECTION ACT—THE WHIG CLUB—SECOND MEETING OF PARLIAMENT—CONDITION OF ULSTER—THE FRENCH ATTEMPT AN INVASION.

On the 21st of January, 1796, the Parliament met pursuant to the last prorogation. In his speech from the throne, the Lord-Lieutenant adverted to the secret and treasonable associations which existed in the country, and recommended both Houses to devise such measures as would prevent the recurrence of disturbances and restore a reverence for the laws of the country. The address was moved by Lord Tyrone. Immediately after this motion was seconded, Grattan delivered one of his abusive, and therefore ineffectual, speeches. He attacked Lord Buckingham, Lord Westmoreland and the British Cabinet. He compared the conduct of the British Minister with that of a drunken bully who struck Ireland as he was running away from France; and charged him with having swindled Ireland out of her revenue. "At the very time," said he, "that Holland was gone, that Prussia had deserted us; that Spain had lowered her tone, her armies defeated, and her sovereign, tottering on his throne, had made a peace with the French Republic, at this very time, the British Minister thought fit to insult Ireland." He then dragged in a condemnation of the conduct of the British Cabinet towards America before her independence, and concluded his ravings by moving an amendment to the address, *viz.*, that the House should petition the King to recommend to the Imperial Parliament an equality of custom duties between the two countries.[1] The House considered that the introduction of such a measure by way of an amendment to the address was informal, and rejected it by 122 to 14.[2]

The Attorney-General then intimated his intention of introducing a bill to indemnify certain magistrates and others who had "acted for the public good though not exactly under the existing laws"; and also a bill to make conspiracy to murder felony. "Conspiracies to murder," he said, "were frequent now, and the idea of assassination as familiar as that of fowling . . . and even in the city of Dublin, conspiracies to assassinate were, as he had indubitable proof, become very frequent."[3] On the 28th, he moved for leave to bring in a bill for the more effectual prevention of insurrections, tumults and riots by Defenders and other disorderly persons, and also a bill for indemnifying such magistrates and other persons who might have, since the 1st of January, 1795, exceeded the ordinary forms and rules of law for the preservation of the public peace and the suppression of insurrections. Leave was granted, and both bills were then brought in and read a first time. Curran rose and moved "that this House do appoint a committee to inquire into the state of the poor and the price of labour in this kingdom". As the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, this motion was intended to be an answer to the bills presented that evening by the Attorney-General, and was not made from a wish to alleviate the hardships of the poor or raise the price of labour. The House took this view of the motion, and, though Grattan spoke in its favour, the adjournment was carried by 137 to 16.[4]

On the 3rd of February, Grattan made an extraordinary motion in connection with the bill of indemnity. He desired the House to make an inquiry into the conduct of the magistrates before passing a bill to indemnify them. For this purpose, he proposed that the judges who had gone circuit through the disturbed counties, the sheriffs, and the jailors of these counties, should be examined at the Bar of the House. The motion gave rise to an animated debate in which the strongest evidence was given by the country gentlemen of the deplorable condition of Connaught and of the barbarities committed by the Defenders. The House manifested very decided approbation of the conduct of Lord Carhampton and the magistrates who had resorted to extreme measures in order to pacify Connaught, agreed that the facts were too notorious to require proof, and deprecated any delay in passing the bill. The feeling was so strong, that the order of the day, being put, passed without a division. On this occasion, many of Grattan's followers deserted him, as Egan, Conolly, O'Hara and Hardy. Egan said that he had come down determined to vote for Grattan's motion, but that when "he heard so many respectable gentlemen on all sides of the House rise in their places, and declare upon their honours the facts respecting the situation of their respective counties," he felt bound to support the order of the day which had been moved by the Attorney-General. Conolly declared that if Grattan "wished for proof of the necessity of the bill, he would call for the attendance of the widows and orphans who had been left to survive the crimes and outrages of those miscreants who had disgraced the country".[1]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvi., p. 4.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 11.

[3] *Ib.*, p. 12.

[4] *Ib.*, p. 27.

Though Grattan's amendment to the address, respecting the equalisation of the custom duties between the two countries, had been defeated by an immense majority, he brought forward the same subject on the 15th of February. On that day he moved two resolutions: (1) that it was just and expedient that the manufactures of Ireland should be admitted into the ports of Great Britain on the same terms as the manufactures of Great Britain were admitted into the ports of Ireland; (2) that an humble address be presented to His Majesty, laying before him this resolution, and beseeching him to recommend to the Imperial Parliament the adoption of this measure.[1] This matter had been for some time in negotiation between the two countries, the most conciliatory declarations, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, during the debate had been made by the British Government, and there was every reason to hope that when the measure could be brought forward at a proper time, it would be granted. Grattan desired a combative resolution or declaration from the Irish Parliament; "it was by this mode of proceeding," he said, "that Ireland had obtained her Free Constitution, her Free Trade, the independence of her legislature, and every valuable privilege, political and commercial, she now enjoyed."[2] But Grattan's power and influence were gone for ever. At this time, he was a complete stranger to the feelings which governed the Irish Commons. Times were indeed changed with that body. Instead of seeking opportunities for displaying their jealousy of the Imperial Parliament, they desired to conciliate that Assembly, and to adopt every measure suggested to them for the defence of the Empire. Whilst Grattan was raving about the misconduct of the British Cabinet and the Irish Government, and was pouring forth groundless accusations against both, the vast majority of his hearers were thinking of the probability of an invasion; of the union of their domestic enemies; of the nightly murders, burnings and devastations of the United Irishmen and Defenders; and of the best means of averting the ruin which threatened them and their institutions. The House wisely declined to pass a resolution which might excite the alarm of English manufacturers in a time of war. The first motion, on which the second depended, was rejected by 82 to 16.[1]

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[1] This very instructive discussion is in *Irish Debates*, xvi., pp. 42-53.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvi., p. 80.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 78.

It has been mentioned that early in the session the Attorney-General had introduced a bill for the more effectual prevention of insurrections and tumultuous risings, and that the bill had been read a first time. This gentleman now resolved to withdraw his bill, and to give the House full time to examine and consider whether such a measure was necessary. On the 20th of February, he moved that the House should resolve itself into a committee of the whole House, in order to inquire what measures were necessary to restore tranquillity to the disturbed parts of the kingdom. When this motion had passed, the Attorney-General described to the committee the growth of Defenderism, its objects and constitution; its extraordinary development in Connaught, where the Defenders had frequently attacked the King's troops, and its extension to other parts of the country; instanced many acts of atrocity committed by members of the association; and pointed out that, as the Defenders wore the appearance of peaceful citizens during the day, and met by night "for the purpose of plunder, murder and devastation," some new measure must be adopted to put an end to such enormities. He concluded his speech by proposing resolutions to the following effect:—

1. That the numerous attempts to assassinate magistrates, to murder witnesses, to plunder houses and take arms by force, required that greater powers should be given to magistrates.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvi., p. 90.

2. That in those parts where Defenderism prevailed, it was necessary to give magistrates enlarged powers of searching for arms and weapons, and securing the same.

3. That, as many attacks had been made on houses by large bodies of armed insurgents for the purpose of taking arms and money, and murdering those who resisted them or gave information against them, it was necessary to give magistrates enlarged powers of preventing the meeting or assembling of such bodies.

4. That it was necessary to give magistrates larger powers with respect to vagabonds, idle and disorderly persons, and such as had no lawful trade, or any honest means of earning a livelihood.

These resolutions were carried with the single negative of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who asserted that nothing could restore tranquillity to the country but a redress of the grievances of the people.[1] This statement was made on the 20th of February, and in the May following, this traitor proceeded to London on his way to Hamburg,[2] for the purpose of negotiating with Hoche for the invasion of his country.[3]

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[1] This debate was short, *Irish Debates*, xvi., pp. 102-106.

[2] He was joined in London by Arthur O'Connor, Madden's *United Irishmen*, ii., p. 390.

[3] Lord Edward Fitzgerald is generally spoken of as an amiable though misguided young man; but this judgment is quite too lenient. Like the other United Irishmen he contemplated with equanimity the prospect of confiscation and massacre. He rebelled, as Tone had done, because his request was refused. In 1790, he left his regiment, then in Canada, without leave, and applied to the King to give him the Lieutenant-Colonelcy of it. He was refused, and then began to declare in all companies that he would never rejoin his regiment (*Dropmore MSS.*, ii., p. 340). In October, 1792, that is, one month after the horrible massacres of September, we find him in Paris, lodging with Tom Paine. Even his biographer, Madden, is shocked that he displayed no horror of atrocities, with which he must have been well acquainted. In this year he was dismissed the army.

On the following Monday, when the new Insurrection Bill was read a first time, Grattan complained that it was partial, and did not include such offences as were then being committed in the county of Armagh. To meet what he considered omissions in the bill, he proposed certain amendments, but the Attorney-General answered his objections by showing that the bill made no distinction of persons, and that it applied to all. In his speech, Grattan attributed the crimes committed in Armagh to the Orangemen, but this charge was wholly unfounded. Grattan, at this time, was entirely in the hands of the Dublin Roman Catholics and United Irishmen, and derived his information on this matter from them. In the spring of 1796, the Orange Institution was exclusively composed of members of the Established Church, and was in no way connected with the Break-of-day Boys, who were Presbyterians and the real authors of the disturbances.[1] The amendments were rejected without a division, and the bill ordered to be read a second time on the next day.[2]

When the report of the committee on the Insurrection Bill was about to be read, Grattan, who had not attended the committee, and had allowed the time for moving amendments to pass, proposed that the bill should be recommitted. Harking back to the disturbances in Armagh, he declared that neither the existing law nor the bill gave sufficient protection to the poor people who were driven from their dwellings in that country; and desired to insert an amendment in the bill, compelling the country to pay full compensation to the sufferers for their losses. In answer to this complaint, the Attorney-General pointed out that such crimes as those committed in Armagh were already made felony of death, that therefore it was unnecessary to enact new punishments, and that indemnity to the sufferers was also provided by the law.[1] George Ponsonby spoke in favour of the recommittal of the bill, but the close of his speech showed that he was not so blind to the condition of the country as Grattan: "Who could talk of improvement in the Constitution while the dagger of the assassin was at his throat? or who could talk so eloquently of the faults of administration as to catch attention from him who feared for his life and his fortune, and clung to the arm of power as alone able to protect him? He had always been a friend of the people and would continue so; but to a people so infatuated as to resort to crimes most horrid to ameliorate their condition, and who seemed ready to wade through slaughter to catch perhaps a doubtful advantage, no man could do service, unless it were by warning them that they who thus abused liberty deserved to be slaves."[2] This peroration to a speech advocating delay in the passing of a measure urgently required to disarm the assassin of his knife, and to coerce a people guilty of crimes "most horrid," and seemingly "ready to wade through slaughter," gives us a measure of the intellectual capacity of the speaker. George Ponsonby was well aware that assassination was rife, and savage crimes common, yet the only remedy he could suggest for the miseries of his country was to tell the assassins and murderers that they who abused liberty deserved to be slaves. The conduct of the other leader of the Opposition, Grattan, was infinitely worse than that of Ponsonby. Though he often called attention to the persecution of the Roman Catholics in Armagh, a very small portion of the kingdom, he never mentioned the atrocities committed by the United Irishmen and Defenders, atrocities which were infinitely more cruel, general and destructive, than those committed in a civil war. But, on the contrary, he prayed for the success of the United Irishmen in the House of Commons, and justified the crimes of both them and the Defenders in a pamphlet which he published in the following year. These facts will be mentioned a little later.

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[1] See the evidence given before the Select Committee on Orange lodges, xiv., pp. 36, 258.

[2] *Irish Debates*, xvi., pp. 107-118.

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[1] 15 & 16 Geo. III., c. 21.

[2] *Irish Debates*, xvi., p. 167.

On the 24th of March, the Speaker presented the money bills to the Lord Lieutenant. His speech on this occasion expressed the true feelings of the House at this time, and manifested the change that had come over the spirit of that body. One paragraph is here given: "We are part of the Empire; we will stand or fall with Britain; it is our repeated, determined resolution, and this nation will exert all its powers, and will call forth all its resources to support with her the common cause, to uphold the safety of the land, the religion, and the Constitution, against the overthrow which the present unprovoked and unexampled war attempts to threaten them with".[1] The session ended on the 15th of April.

In June of this year, the Whig Club published repeatedly, in an opposition paper,[2] the following resolution, which was stated to be a report from a committee appointed by that society to enquire into the situation of the labouring poor. "Resolved, that from the information we have received from some counties in this kingdom, it appears that the price of labour is not adequate to the support of the labouring poor in those counties".[3]

We may well ask, for what purpose was this resolution of a political club published at a time when an invasion was feared; when a habitual spirit of insurgency existed in the country; and when disaffection was general? The resolution did not specify the nature of the information laid before the Committee; it did not even name the counties in which the low prices prevailed; nor did it suggest any remedy or means of relief. No list of subscriptions raised among the members of the club, no exhortation to the benevolence of the public accompanied this bald and vague announcement. If we remember that this club raised a subscription for the purpose of distributing Paine's *Rights of Man*, we can have no hesitation in concluding that this resolution was intended to strengthen discontent and foment a spirit of turbulence.[1]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvi, p. 211.

[2] *Dublin Evening Post.*

[3] Alexander Knox; *Political Essays*, p. 91. See also Lord Clare's speech on the 10th February, 1800.

On the 16th of September, the first arrest of the leaders of the Northern United Irishmen was effected. Lord Downshire, Lord Castlereagh and Lord Westmeath, attended by a large body of horse and foot, apprehended on a charge of high treason Henry Haslett, Samuel Kennedy, Rowly Osborne, Daniel Shanaghan and John Young. Neilson and Thomas Russell surrendered themselves on hearing that the warrants against them were in town. Others also were arrested in the suburbs of Belfast and in Lisburn. This was a very severe blow to the disaffected in Belfast and its neighbourhood.[2] Wolfe Tone, writing to his wife on the 30th of this month, expressed his grief at this mishap: "I found an English paper, wherein there was an article, copied from the *Northern Star* of September 16, by which I saw, to my most unspeakable distress and anxiety that

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[1] The younger Grattan gives in full a report from a committee of the club, appointed to inquire into the state of the labouring poor, which was laid before the club on the 12th of July; that is, a month after the first publication of the resolution mentioned above. This report was a mere political document, and was far removed from any charitable or philanthropic purpose (*Life of Grattan*, iv, p. 246).

[2] *Belfast Hist. Collections*, p. 439-442.

Harry Haslett, and two persons of the name of Osborne and Shanaghan, had been arrested that day at Belfast on a charge of high treason; and that *Sam Neilson* and *Russell* had surrendered themselves voluntarily. You will judge how I felt the blow".[1]

The Parliament met again on the 13th of October. It was summoned at this unusual time because, as the Lord-Lieutenant told the Houses in his speech from the throne, an invasion was threatened. He also said that, in addition to the regular forces in the kingdom, troops had been sent from Great Britain. When an address to the King had been moved and seconded, Grattan proposed the following amendment to it: "To represent to his Majesty that the most efficient method for strengthening the country and promoting unanimity was to take such measures, and to enact such laws, as to ensure to all his Majesty's subjects the blessings and privileges of the Constitution without any distinction of religion".[2] Grattan's speech on this occasion was extraordinarily seditious and inflammatory. There was not a word in it that could enlighten or persuade; it was a wild rhapsody of furious invective against the British Cabinet and the Irish Government. He commenced by saying that the speech from the throne showed the indifference of the Government to the protection of the lower orders of the Roman Catholic subjects. Dealing with the conduct of the war by the British Ministry, he accused them of inefficiency, and of having betrayed their country into the war by assurances of victory, and of having induced it to continue the war by a false confidence in French bankruptcy. He ostentatiously displayed the weakness of the empire and the triumphs of its enemies. The French, he said, had five armies, "one in Holland, two in Italy, and two on the Rhine, who drive the Austrians out of Italy, drive them a second time out of Italy, drive them in another part of the globe to the Danube; in the course of a few first months of the campaign, fight twenty battles, conquer five crowned heads, and turn the English out of the ports of Europe; while poor England, with a group of dupes, her ministers, prophets and financiers, standing as it were on the rock of public credit to see the fulfilling of her Minister's predictions, and enjoy the shipwreck of her enemies—she sees her allies dispersed, their armies scattered, their kings subjugated, the gates of Europe shut against her trident, and her funds, that old vanity and lost hope, down drop fathom after fathom like a falling devil." "Can you conceive," he went on, "any situation more blasted than that of a cabal, whom the people of England and Ireland persist to tolerate as the Ministry, assuring their country that the enemy was exhausted, being on the eve of efforts on the part of that enemy exceeding anything before attempted by herself, or in the same time by any other nation; efforts which probably would not have been called forth but for their fatal perseverance[1] in a desperate war, a perseverance the result of their falsehood, and a despair the result of their incapacity." He then turned to the conduct of the Ministers in Ireland. "Here," said he, "the judgments of Heaven had been most emphatically called down by a blasted, brazen, flagitious, unqualified and unblushing profession and practice of the lowest and rankest public prostitution." To prove these accusations, he repeated all the old unscrupulous and unfounded charges against the

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[1] *Life*, vol. ii., p. 333.

[2] *Irish Debates*, xvii., p. 13.

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[1] "The right hon. gentleman (Grattan) after supporting a war for three years, without indicating any wish that peace should be accelerated by negotiations, now, in the fourth year, asks with the air of a man at once triumphant and consistent, why the Minister did not formerly send to Paris the Ambassador whom he has now sent" (Mr. Alexander in this debate).

British Ministers.[1] They had attempted to take back the Constitution of 1782 by the offer of the commercial treaty; they had withdrawn the proffered trade, and swindled the revenue; they had sold the peerage to buy the Commons, and for this purpose had created a new establishment of salaries in 1789; they had disbursed money without the authority of law; they had robbed the Crown of its reversions; had scolded the people from the Bar of the Commons, and kicked their prayers after them; had instructed the grand juries to publish denunciations against the Catholics, had then taken up the Catholics, resumed Protestant ascendency, again taken up the Catholics, and finally let them down; they had promised a change of men and measures, got a great supply, and then recalled the Minister for making promises under their own authority, and told the Catholics, "whom they had most impudently, most blastedly and most foolishly deceived," that they must for ever remain disqualified for seats in Parliament; they had prosecuted the leading Catholics without colour or pretence for high treason, and now gave up the lower orders to an armed mob to be exterminated.[2]

The bitterest opponent of the Roman Catholics could not have devised anything more injurious to their claims than this motion and the virulent tirade which preceded it.

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[1] In this speech Grattan alluded to his oft-repeated calumny, that Lord Clare, when Attorney-General, had asserted the propriety of governing Ireland by corruption. It would be folly to refute any one of Grattan's innumerable misstatements; but Mr. Lecky has adopted it (vol. vii., p. 39). What that true patriot and clear-headed statesman did say on this subject may be seen in the ninth volume of the *Irish Debates*, p. 181. "I recollect Lord Townshead's proroguing the Parliament, and I recollect when next they met, they voted him an address of thanks, which address cost this country half a million of money. I hope to God I shall never again see such effects from party; I hope to God I shall never again see half a million of the people's money employed to procure an address from their representatives."

[2] *Irish Debates*, xvii., pp. 3-14.

To introduce a great political question involving so much passion, prejudice and controversy, as an amendment to the address to the King, was an act of extreme folly which was reprobated by several friends of that body. "This measure, then," said George Knox, "was brought forward not to be acceded to, but to be rejected; not to produce harmony and conciliation, but to engender discord and disaffection; to divide those who were again beginning to unite, and in the hour of negotiation and, perhaps, of invasion, to encourage the enemy with the grateful prospect of civil broils, or, at least, of neutral loyalty." Sir Hercules Langrishe, the oldest friend of the Roman Catholics, "objected to the motion as putting at a greater distance the object of their mutual wishes, as introducing a question of passion and prejudice, when the great object that presses on us is, not *improvement* but *preservation;* when the great alternative which offers itself to your care and choice is, whether Ireland is to retain *the blessings of a free constitution* and *a growing prosperity*, or sink in the common ruin of *rapine* and of *anarchy*." Mr. Osburne asked: "To what Parliament is it now asserted that the Catholic does not feel as zealous a loyalty in his breast as the Protestant? To that Parliament which has granted largely on the conviction of the falsehood of such an assertion, and has thereby given the fullest hope of granting all." A wise advocate would have reminded the Roman Catholics that they owed the concessions which had been lately made to them to the conviction that they were loyal and attached to the Constitution, and would have told them, "now is your time; prove your zeal in the common cause when your country is threatened with an invasion; act with the Protestants, and in their esteem and gratitude you will find your emancipation." Grattan's motion was rejected by 149 to 12.[1]

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[1] The debate, as in vol. xvii. of *Irish Debates*, pp. 3-51. Mr. Lecky makes no mention of it.

When this motion had been defeated, the Attorney-General moved for leave to bring in a bill to empower the Lord-Lieutenant to take up and detain all persons suspected of treasonable practices. No measure was ever more necessary. An invasion was expected. The organisation, which enabled the United Irishmen to levy a revolutionary army, had been completed on the 10th of May, 1795,[1] and the directory of that body had just formally accepted the offer of assistance held out to them by the French Republic.[2] Yet the bill was opposed. It must be understood that the bill did not propose to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act, as was asserted by the Opposition and repeated by many hasty writers. Only one clause of that valuable statute—that which provided that persons indicted for high treason should be tried within a limited time – was suspended, all the rest was left untouched. The arguments brought forward by the diminutive Opposition were at the same time absurd and inflammatory. George Ponsonby said "he was aware that the present members of the Administration were men of vindictive spirit, and he did not wish to entrust the whole personal liberty of the subject to lovers of vengeance." He ended his speech by declaring that "it [the bill] was designed as an instrument of terror and vengeance in the hands of the Ministers. In this idea he would always oppose it, and therefore he moved that the chairman do now leave the chair."[3] Grattan first argued that there was no evidence to justify such a measure, and then censured the House for its conduct. "You have deprived the subject of political liberty, and you now deprive him of civil liberty lest he should exercise that liberty to reform abuses—lest he should use the liberty he has left in order to recover the liberty he has lost. He protested against the system; it is abominable; you feel it to be so, and take these measures of power because you know the people can't be reconciled to it but by power, because you feel you have lost the confidence of the great body of the people."[1] Ponsonby's motion was rejected by 137 to 7.

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[1] Report from the secret committee of the Lords, 1798.

[2] Report from the secret committee of the Commons, 1798.

[3] *Irish Debates*, xvii., p. 52.

Next day a bill "for encouraging and disciplining such corps of men as should voluntarily enrol themselves under officers to be commissioned by his Majesty for the defence of this kingdom during the present war" was read a second time and passed very shortly afterwards. This important Act gave rise to the yeomanry, and was immediately taken advantage of by the loyalists of the country. If the old volunteer system had been revived, that is, a system of armed voluntary bodies electing their own officers without taking the oath of allegiance or any obligation to military obedience, the United Irishmen, Defenders, and disaffected Roman Catholics would have pressed into the ranks, and on the first occasion deserted to the enemy. But officers appointed by the King were certain to enlist none but loyal men. Some of the new corps wisely refused to admit Roman Catholics. The estimate for the yeomanry at first laid before Parliament was for a number not exceeding 20,000, but in the course of six months above 37,000 were enrolled, and, as the difficulties of the country grew, their numbers increased so much that during the rebellion the yeomanry force exceeded 50,000 men, and might have been increased to a much greater extent.[2] Every effort was made by the United Irishmen to deter loyal subjects from joining the yeomanry. Persons who had enrolled themselves became objects of a most cruel persecution in their persons and property,[3] and the publications of the United

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvii., p. 69.

[2] Report of the secret committee of the Commons, 1798.

[3] *Ib.*

Irishmen teemed with threats and execrations against them.[1] But the wisdom of the measure was proved by the confidence it diffused among all loyal subjects, and the dismay it caused among the disaffected.

Four days after Grattan's amendment in favour of the Roman Catholics had been rejected by the overwhelming majority of 149 to 12, he moved the following resolution: "that the admissibility of persons professing the Roman Catholic religion to seats in Parliament was consistent with the safety of the Crown and of the connection of Ireland with Great Britain". This was, as Sir Hercules Langrishe said, merely an adjournment of the debate which had taken place a few nights ago. No reasonable man could expect that the House would agree to a measure which it had rejected by an immense majority only four days before. The resolution must therefore have been brought forward without a hope of success, and with the certainty that it would inflame and divide. Grattan commenced his speech by telling the House that the Roman Catholic question was now a matter between the people of Ireland and the Crown of England, that is, that the Protestants of Ireland were all favourable to the claims of that body[2]. He then portrayed the miserable condition of England. Where are her colonies, he asked? Where are the thirteen provinces of America? The East Indies still remained to her, but they were only wealth, not population, and the West Indies were the graves of her best officers and men. England had lost her allies, and her enemies now were her old allies and new France. The population of France was more than thirty millions, opposed to less than fifteen millions in the British Islands. Of these latter, three millions would be required to oppose three millions of Irish Roman Catholics: so that six millions must be deducted from the strength of the Empire. The Ministry refused the blessings of the English Constitution to the Irish, though they gave them to the Corsicans and Canadians: refused them at a time when the British navy could not keep the sea without them. What is the British navy? a number of planks—certainly not! a number of British men?—certainly not! No, but a number of British and Irish.[1] Transfer the Irish seamen to the French, and where is the British navy? If the Minister insists that the English religion shall be a necessary qualification to sit in the Irish Parliament, we must insist that Englishmen, having no property in Ireland, shall be banished out of our Parliament. That an English gentleman should come to this country on the part of the British Cabinet, and say that it was necessary for his country to exclude a part of ourselves from Parliament, was an insult so impudent and blasted, that it could only be tolerated if Great Britain had conquered France, Spain and America. He concluded this medley of ignorance and sedition by saying that "he approved of the British Ministry when they liberalised towards the Catholic, and condemned the Ministry in 95, when it renounced its liberality and its honour, and returned to its barbarity, and employed Christian sects, like hell-hounds, to hunt down one another. That in consequence of this, they have set up in Ireland a proscriptive State, a proscriptive Parliament, a proscriptive Monarchy, a proscriptive connection; they have done so when the condition of the Empire is in a great degree feeble, and that of the Constitution in the last degree corrupt". The other leader of the Opposition, George Ponsonby, also dwelt on the situation of Great Britain. "Are not," he exclaimed, "the consequences of her ill successes blazoned to the world by her recent measures? What made Mr. Pitt sue for peace to the French Directory? What made him apply to the King of Prussia for his mediation, which was refused? What made him afterwards apply to the Danish Ambassador for the mediation of his court, which was refused also?" etc. But such language, and its infinite folly, only tend to irritate the reader. The resolution was rejected by 143 to 19.[1]

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[1] Knox, *Political Essays*, p. 105; *Beresford Correspondence*, ii., p, 128.

[2] This falsehood was first fabricated at the meeting of the Roman Catholic United Irishmen held at Francis St. Chapel on the 9th of April, 1795. Dr. MacNeven was its author. It was not intended for Irish ears, for every one in that country knew it was false, but for friends in England. To the speeches made at this meeting, Grattan was much indebted for the arguments brought forward by him in 1796 and 1797 (*Orations delivered at a meeting of the Roman Catholics of Dublin*, 1795).

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[1] Mr. Lecky tells us that this speech consisted of "sentences of condensed power, worthy of Tacitus" (vii., p. 203).

About the time when Grattan was disparaging the strength of the Empire and telling the Irish Commons that there would be no invasion, a special messenger arrived from France, and announced to the directory of the United Irishmen that an army of 15,000 men would speedily arrive, together with a large quantity of arms and ammunition intended for the Irish Republicans.[2] A few days after this messenger had left Ireland on his return, a very extraordinary occurrence took place: a letter from France was received by the directory of United Irishmen, which was considered by them to be authentic, stating that the projected descent was postponed for some months. These contradictory communications threw the Irish directory off their guard, in consequence of which they omitted to prepare the people for the reception of the enemy. When

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvii, pp. 72-126. Mr. Lecky makes a singular mistake in saying that "this was the last occasion on which the question of Catholic Emancipation was raised in the Parliament of Ireland" (vii., p. 205). The question was again raised and debated in May, 1797, when W. B. Ponsonby introduced Grattan's revolutionary Reform Bill (*Irish Debates*, xvii., p. 530).

[2] Reports from the secret committees of the Lords and Commons, 1798.

Thomas A. Emmet, in his examination before a Committee of the Lords, was asked how could he account for the loyalty displayed by the people at the time when the French were in Bantry Bay, he replied that this letter had so disconcerted the United Irishmen Executive that they left the people to themselves. In other words, the country remained quiet, because the Northern and Dublin traitors had not despatched their emissaries to corrupt the people by prophecies just written as if made long ago; by lies that the Protestants were about to rise and massacre them; by their promises of dividing the land and abolishing tithes; and by every means fitted to mislead an ignorant and superstitious peasantry. It was not until the following year that the ministers of midnight murder, robbery and outrage made much impression on the peasantry of Munster, and their success was attested by the introduction into that province of the crimes and enormities which disgraced Ulster.[1]

About this time also the state of the North was dreadful, and continued to be so until General Lake in 1797 struck the first effectual blow against rebellion in these parts. In the latter end of 1796 and beginning of 1797, the loyalists of Ulster suffered most severely from the outrages of the United Irishmen; they were stripped of their arms throughout that province; the most horrible murders were perpetrated by large bodies of men in open day, and it was almost impossible to bring the offenders to justice "from the inevitable destruction that awaited the witnesses or jurors who dared to perform their duty".[2] On the night of the 28th of October, 1796, the King's stores in Belfast were broken into, and ten barrels of gunpowder stolen. It was remarked at the time that five barrels of damaged gunpowder were left untouched.[1] The disaffected had adopted the practice of marching in military array, and of assembling in very large bodies under the pretext of saving corn, digging potatoes, etc., but really to terrify the loyal and compel them to join their association: to display their own strength, and to give the people the habit of meeting upon a short notice.[2] But nothing showed more clearly how general the disaffection in the North was than the care taken by the peasantry of the property of those persons who had been arrested on suspicion of high treason. William Orr had his entire harvest cut down by six hundred of his neighbours; Rowly Osborne had forty ricks of hay stacked in a very short time by an immense number; William Weir had 2,360 stooks of grain and thirty-eight ricks of hay completely stacked and thatched in three hours; Samuel Neilson had a field of potatoes dug in seven minutes by a body of fifteen hundred persons.[3]

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[1] Report from the secret committee of the Commons, 1798.

[2] *Ib.*

Two incidents in the November of this year throw light on the condition of Ulster at the time. On the sixth day of that month a proclamation was issued by the Lord-Lieutenant and Council, some paragraphs of which are here given: "Whereas we have received information that divers ill-affected persons have entered into illegal and treasonable associations in several parts of the counties of Antrim, Down, Tyrone, Londonderry and Armagh, to subvert the established Government of this kingdom; and, for effecting such their treasonable purposes, have assassinated divers of his Majesty's faithful and loyal subjects who have endeavoured, and threaten to assassinate all others who shall endeavour, to detect or suppress their treason; and in further prosecution of their designs have endeavoured to deter his Majesty's loyal subjects from enrolling themselves under officers commissioned by his Majesty for the defence of this kingdom during the present war by maiming and destroying their cattle, and by assaulting and wantonly wounding one person because he had enrolled himself, and by threatening assassination against all persons who should so enrol themselves. . . . And whereas we have also received information that on Tuesday, the first of November instant, a considerable number of armed men, associated in the aforesaid treasonable conspiracies, entered the town of Stewartstown, in the county of Tyrone, and cut and maimed several of the peaceable inhabitants of the said town, who had refused to join their associations and who had agreed to enrol themselves in a corps under officers to be commissioned by his Majesty, etc., etc. And whereas we have also received information that . . . many large bodies of men have assembled and arrayed themselves, and marched in military order and with military music through several parts of the said districts, under the pretence of saving corn and digging potatoes (though they far exceeded the numbers necessary to be employed in such services), to the very great terror of the loyal and faithful subjects of his Majesty". The proclamation then proceeded to warn all persons of the dangers they might incur, and charged them on their allegiance to desist from these treasonable practices; and further, commanded all civil and military officers to prevent and disperse all treasonable, seditious, and unlawful assemblies.[1]

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 446.

[2] Report from the secret committee of the Commons, 1798.

[3] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 444.

To counteract the system of assassination and the spread of illegal societies, Lord O'Neill, governor of the county of Antrim, on the 12th of the same month, called a meeting of the magistrates of the county. Resolutions were passed denouncing with indignation and abhorrence the system of assassination and outrage which was making its appearance in their county, and declaring that "this atrocious system" had originated in unlawful meetings held under the pretext of promoting reform; the members of which, it was believed on good grounds, were united under the obligation of unlawful oaths. Another resolution pledged them as men and magistrates to use their best endeavours to stop the progress of sedition, outrage and assassination, in whatever form they might appear.[1]

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[1] Report from the secret committee of the Commons, 1789, Appendix, No. 7.

Towards the end of this year, a vacancy occurred in the representation of the county Antrim. Arthur O'Connor at once presented himself as a candidate for the seat. He and his friend, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, fresh from the betrayal of their country, arrived in Belfast for the purpose of canvassing.[2] On the 22nd of October, O'Connor issued an address to the electors of the county, quite as seditious as any of the speeches delivered by the Opposition in Parliament.[3] His second address to the same body was so treasonable that he was arrested on the 2nd of the following February, and committed to the Tower as one suspected of various treasons.[4] While O'Connor was in Belfast, a letter was received on the 27th of December from the Chief Secretary, announcing the appearance of a French fleet off the southern coast. The chief magistrate of the town[5] immediately called a general meeting of the inhabitants, in which he urged the necessity of arming in defence of their country against the common enemy. But the United Irishmen perverted the meeting to their customary purposes of counteracting the efforts of Government and inflaming the mind of the public. William Sampson, a barrister, afterwards banished, in order to prevent the arming of the loyal, proposed that a committee should be appointed to frame such resolutions as might to them seem proper. O'Connor spoke at great length in favour of Sampson's proposal, which was carried, and a committee of nine was appointed, five of whom at least were United Irishmen.[1] The committee drew up a string of insidious resolutions declaring that the imperfect representation in the Commons was the cause of the present discontent; that a reform in Parliament, without distinction of religion, would restore tranquillity; that they were ready to arm, if the Government would allow them to arm in the same manner as the old volunteers; that is, without taking the oath of allegiance, or any obligation to military obedience. "When the fate of Ireland seemed to tremble in the balance," said Alexander Knox in his address to the United Irishmen who joined in these resolutions, "and every honest mind was on the stretch to avert the impending horrors, you too came forward. But for what purpose? Was it to lay down your jealousies and discontents at the altar of national safety, and join heart and hand in the measures taken for the common defence? No, but it was to counteract the efforts of your better disposed neighbours, and to turn the public occasion, which their honest zeal afforded you, into an opportunity of insulting Government by a proposal in the very teeth of the laws, and of adding fresh fuel to that flame which your own arts had kindled in the bosom of the community"[1].

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[1] *Belfast Hist. Collections*, p. 448-9.

[2] Madden ii., p. 386.

[3] "Grattan, Duquerry, Ponsonby and Sir Laurence Parsons," says Madden, "eschewed all overt acts of sedition and high treason. They considered it was unparliamentary for members to "unthread the rude eye of rebellion." It was only permissible for them to rouse the slumbering people, and stimulate their leaders by their eloquent invectives against government, etc.," vol. ii., p. 376.

[4] His imprisonment lasted for six months. On his liberation, he resumed his treasonable practices. In May, 1798, he was tried for his life at Maidstone, but escaped his just fate through the weakness of the judges.

[5] Then called sovereign of the town.

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[1] O'Connor, William Tennent, Robert Simms, Gilbert McIlveen and Sampson.

On the 16th of December, a great French fleet, consisting of seventeen line of battle ships, thirteen frigates, seven corvettes and six transports, sailed from Brest for the invasion of Ireland. On board there were 13,975 men, and an immense provision of arms and ammunition, together with twenty pieces of field artillery and nine of siege. Never was an expedition so mismanaged. The general in command (Hoche) and the chief admiral chose to sail by themselves in a fast frigate, and on the first night disappeared, and were never again seen until the return of the fleet to France. On the same night, though the weather was serene and the wind favourable, a seventy-four was lost with upwards of 500 men. The absence of Hoche and the chief admiral paralysed the expedition. The fleet separated frequently. On the 21st of the month thirty-five ships were together, eight only being absent, and sailing "in most delicious weather, with a most favourable wind," only three leagues off Cape Clear, yet the second in command (Grouchy) did not dare to seize the opportunity of landing. On the morning of the 22nd the fleet neared Bantry Bay, but on the night of this day an easterly gale again separated the fleet, sixteen only having gained anchorage off an island in the bay, while nineteen were blown to sea. The gale continued, and on the night of Christmas Day the only admiral who remained out of four put to sea without any previous signal to warn the fleet. On the 27th, what remained of the fleet in the bay put to sea, and on the 29th the Commodore made the signal to return to France.[2]

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[1] Knox, *Political Essays*, p. 124. *Belfast Hist. Collections*, pp. 450-455.

[2] Wolfe Tone, who was on board the *Indomptable*, has left us a correct and picturesque account of this expedition.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ORIGIN OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN—PROCEEDINGS IN THE COMMONS—PROPOSED TAX ON ABSENTEES—GENERAL LAKE'S FIRST PROCLAMATION—GRATTAN AND FOX—REPORTS FROM THE SECRET COMMITTEES OF BOTH HOUSES—GRATTAN'S REFORM BILL—SECESSION OF THE OPPOSITION.

THE United Irishmen sprang directly from the agitation which preceded and led to the much-praised but really disastrous settlement of 1782. The Protestant nobility and gentry of Ireland—it must ever be borne in mind that up to 1800 the word Protestant did not include the Presbyterians—had long desired a federal connection with Great Britain; that is, they wished for the protection without the restraint of the protecting Power. They had long shown their hostility to the existing connection by their jealousy of the Imperial Parliament and by their opposition to the British Government in internal affairs. A short time before 1782, the dangers and difficulties of Great Britain had inspired them with hopes of obtaining the exclusive authority over their own country. An alarm of invasion enabled them to raise a large army of volunteers, a showy but useless force, if Marshall Saxe's maxim be true, that an army marches on its belly. Beyond marching at reviews the volunteers were wholly unacquainted with discipline. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes; there was nothing to bind them to their colours, or to unite the different corps into one body.

They did not take the oath of allegiance, nor were they bound by any obligation to military obedience. Being unprovided with a commissariat, they could not have marched against an invader without ravaging the country for their own sustenance. Supported by this body, the Protestant aristocracy of Ireland demanded their independence from their only Protector in the hour of her extremest peril. The demand was acceded to, and a colony, which could not defend itself from external or internal enemies, and which did not possess a single ship of war, was declared by Act of Parliament to be an independent nation. Surely no baser origin of a nation was ever heard of.

The aristocracy, having obtained their desire, would gladly have arrested any further agitation. They were satisfied with their victory; but the Presbyterians, who filled the ranks of the Northern volunteers, were far from being content with a revolution from which they derived no advantage. Their principles were very different from those of the aristocracy, which had employed them as tools. They were strongly inclined to Republicanism, and opposed both to an aristocracy and the Established Church, and had imbued the Ulster regiments with their own democratic ideas. The volunteers had been told so frequently that they were the saviours of the country and the armed majesty of the people, that they naturally expected to have a voice in settling the constitution of the new kingdom. Finding that there was to be no change in the old order of things, and trusting to their armed strength, they revolted against their old masters and attempted to effect a new revolution. They elected a Parliament of their own for the purpose of forcing the constitutional Parliament to carry into effect their own peculiar principles. The attempt was defeated, but the spirit which had prompted it was not stilled. As early as 1784, the volunteers and Presbyterians of the North, perceiving that without the concurrence of the Roman Catholics they could not obtain "a *reformed* legislature acting *independently* of England," began to court that body.[1] An alliance was concluded with the Roman Catholics on the terms: we will give you our clamour for emancipation, and do you give us your numbers for our revolutionary reform.[2] In 1791, the influence of the French Revolution began to be felt by the restless spirits in the North. On the 14th of July in that year, the volunteers and inhabitants of Belfast met in an assembly, convened by public notice, to express their feelings on the French Revolution. The unanimous "declaration" of the assembly shows us how far democracy had advanced in that town. It proclaimed, among other things, that forms of government "may be changed or modelled by the real will of the public—a will supreme, paramount to all other authority," and that "obedience itself ceases to be a duty when the will of the people ceases to be the law of the land."[3] These opinions were absolutely destructive of all government. To carry them into execution, the Society of United Irishmen was established, as a circular of that body informs us, "to give an example, which, when well followed, must collect the public will, and concentrate the public force—the effect of which must be rapid, momentous and consequential."[4]

Of the means which the members of this Society adopted to spread their opinions, and to terrify the timid to join their conspiracy, enough has been said. In Ulster, their success was great. At the commencement of 1797, the

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 295.

[2] *Irish Debates*, xvii., p. 185.

[3] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 352.

[4] Circular of the Dublin Society to two societies in the town of Belfast.

United Irishmen possessed more influence there than the Government.[1] All civil authority was at an end.[2] There was scarcely a day without a daring outrage.[3] The loyal inhabitants were deprived of their arms, and, if they uttered their sentiments, they were assassinated.[4] Magistrates were shot for doing their duty.[5] Two authorities of the highest value present us with a picture of the frightful anarchy which prevailed in Ulster at this time. "In the latter end of 1796 and beginning of 1797," says the report of the secret committee of the Irish Commons, "the loyal inhabitants of Ulster suffered most severely from the depredations of the United Irishmen; throughout the province, they were stript of their arms; the most horrid murders were perpetrated by large bodies of men in open day, and it became nearly impossible to bring the offenders to justice, from the inevitable destruction that awaited the witnesses or jury who dared to perform their duty." On the 1st of February, 1797, Alexander Knox addressed a letter to the United Irishmen of Belfast, in which he says: "Gracious Heaven! to what a state have you already brought this once peaceful province. Like the first deceiver of man, you have stolen into the retreats of innocence and tranquillity, and changed them by your pestilent suggestions into scenes of turbulence and guilt. . . . Till your accursed society existed, there was no midnight terror, no wanton cruelty. The wealthy farmer went to his repose, and the benighted traveller pursued his way, unsuspecting and unarmed. But since your disastrous rise, I appeal to any man who knows the country, whether there have not been more house-breakings and house-burnings, and more attacks upon person and property, than occurred for an hundred years before."[6]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvii., p. 147.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 144.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 140.
[4] *Ib.*, pp. 141, 148.
[5] *Ib.*, pp. 148, 154.
[6] *Political Essays*, p. 133.

What kind of reform these men desired, we know perfectly and thoroughly. The writings of Wolfe Tone, the gloomy verbosity of Drennan, and their own plan, published at an early stage of their career, have explained every detail. It was revolutionary democracy at which they aimed. Its features were universal suffrage, annual elections, and every man capable of being elected. Nor would this scheme have long satisfied them. In 1795, Dr. Drennan addressed a letter to Lord Fitzwilliam, hailing him as a member of the Society for Constitutional Information, a society which had been denounced as seditious by the report of the secret committee of the British Commons. In this letter, he says: "My lord, I do firmly believe that any plan of reform, sincerely put into execution, would do much to please, though not to satisfy, the people. Any reform, once made, would render every reform afterwards more easy; and, when adopted, any plan would tend to perfect itself. It may walk on, as Catholic emancipation did, from gradual to total."[1] "What *total reform* means in the vocabulary of the United Irishmen," says Alexander Knox, "need not be explained . . . it threatens consequences which no one can contemplate without horror and dismay."[2]

On the 16th of January, 1797, the Parliament met, pursuant to the last adjournment. The Chief Secretary read to the Commons a message from the Lord-Lieutenant, stating that Spain had declared war in an abrupt and aggressive manner; that the negotiations with France had failed; and that the King was greatly pleased by the general spirit of loyalty displayed by the people on the appearance of a hostile fleet in Bantry Bay. On the following day, an address was moved to the King for his gracious communication. Grattan made a long and abusive speech, ending with an amendment to the address to the following effect: that the House felt the highest confidence in the King's desire for peace, but could not concur that his Ministers had been serious in their negotiations with France; or that the naval force of Great Britain had been exerted with due vigilance on a late occasion for the protection of Ireland.[1] Grattan's amendment was defeated in a thin House by 90 to 7.[2]

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[1] Letter to his Excellency, Earl Fitzwilliam, Dublin, 1795. It is signe by the author.

[2] *Political Essays*, p. 189.

On the 21st of February, the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced his budget. He estimated that the expenses of the year would amount to £3,800,000, which sum included an increase of a million in the military department. He proposed to augment the regular troops by 8,000 and the militia by 4,000 men, which, with the yeomanry, made an augmentation of 42,000 men. The House manifested an extraordinary desire to raise a still greater force than that proposed in the budget. Sir John Blaquière urged that an addition of 10,000 men should be made to the regular troops to serve in the three kingdoms. Mr. Vandeleur proposed that the additional troops should serve only in Ireland. This was opposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the ground that it showed a selfish and churlish disposition on the part of Ireland, to prepare for her own defence instead of bearing a part in the general defence of the Empire. Grattan supported Vandeleur's proposal. The defence of Ireland, he said, ought not to be left to the British Minister; the defence of his own country was a primary object to him—the defence of Ireland was only of subordinate interest. To leave the defence of

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[1] Mr. Lecky describes this amendment as "pointing to peace". No doubt the word *peace* occurs in the amendment, but the motion really was a censure on the King's Ministers.

[2] *Irish Debates*, xvii., pp. 159-288.

Ireland to him, lowered very much the character of Parliament, and gave to the debates of the House a ridiculous and servile complexion. It simply meant, that everything should be granted to the Minister, without securing anything for Ireland. The Chief Secretary combated the idea of restraining the additional force to Ireland, thus crippling the hands of Government. He mentioned that twelve regiments of fencible cavalry had volunteered to serve in Ireland, and that the clans of Scotland had offered to raise 16,000 men for the same purpose. George Ponsonby declared that the measures proposed would not defend the country from an enemy that had vanquished Spain, Holland, Italy and almost Germany. The only way to defend the country was to rely upon the enthusiastic force of the whole nation. All measures were futile that did not excite that powerful force. He was not afraid to mention those measures which would save the country. They were a complete reform of the representation of the people in Parliament ; a perfect emancipation of the Catholics ; an abolition of all religious distinctions ; and a general equalisation of commerce between the two countries. Nothing else but these measures could save the country, and he would persevere in recommending them.[1]

The introduction of controversial questions, at a time when the House was considering the defence of the country, was justly reprobated. Grattan, however, rose a second time, and said that he agreed perfectly with Ponsonby. Sir Lawrence Parsons, who was deeply impressed with the danger of the country, proposed an address to the Lord-Lieutenant "to embody 50,000 yeomen in addition to those already embodied". Finally, the motion of Blaquière was changed into the simple form that 10,000 men should be raised for the public service.[1]

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[1] A remark of Lord Charlemont about this time shows how low the Opposition had fallen in public estimation. His friend, Halliday, had written to him that the defection from the Opposition of Sir L. Parsons had astonished many of his own friends. Charlemont replied, "What you mean by the defection of Sir Lawrence Parsons I do not exactly know, unless the refusal to obey the dictates of a private party of eight or nine gentlemen, lawyers and others, be deemed defection. Unless it shall be deemed defection to follow the dictates of our own unbiassed reason, rather than implicitly to assent to the peevish and ill-timed motions of a few, whose opposition is rendered the less respectable, because in some of them at least, without any breach of charity, it may be supposed to originate from disappointment and consequent discontent" (*Charlemont's MSS.*, ii., p. 295).

Two days later, Sir Lawrence Parsons again proposed that 50,000 yeomen should be added to the existing force. The Chief Secretary opposed on the ground that the motion implied neglect on the part of the Government, and infringed on the province of the Executive. To this argument Grattan replied, that Sir Lawrence had proposed a large force to oppose the enemy, and that force was to consist of the people. To which, the English servant of the English Minister says: "What, would you have me bid for the people?" He would say to that English deputy of that English Minister, if he would not bid for the people he might go about his business. The motion was defeated by 125 to 23.[2]

A very interesting debate, relating to commercial matters, took place on the 25th of April. On that day the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave notice that, in the Committee of Ways and Means, he would propose an open loan for £800,000 at 6 per cent., with a bonus of £5 added to the capital. This measure was very strongly opposed. It was stated that the Bank daily rejected the bills of the best houses in the city; that, in consequence, commerce and manufactures were at a standstill; that there were weekly meetings of the merchants to consider how bankruptcies might be postponed; and that, if Government offered

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvii., pp. 324-339. [2] *Ib.*, pp. 345-357.

7 per cent., it would be impossible to obtain money for commercial purposes. The Chancellor treated these objections very lightly, but the Speaker, whose authority in matters of trade and commerce was considered very high, supported the objections, and the matter was not then proceeded with.[1]

On the 27th, George Ponsonby proposed a vote of censure on the King's Ministers for their neglect and unskilfulness in the direction and distribution of the naval and military forces of the country on the appearance of the French fleet in the previous December. He had no authentic papers or proofs to proceed on, for the House had refused to let him have any, and he was obliged to depend on mere rumours. His speech consisted entirely of inflammatory abuse. The Administration had decided, he said, to make Ireland, rather than England, the theatre of war. In privilege, Ireland was to be ever inferior to England, but in danger, hazard and destruction alone, she was to have the superiority. He was not surprised at the misconduct of the Administration. They came into power ill-omened and inauspicious, stained with falsehood, and destined to blast the hopes of the largest body of the King's loyal subjects. The object of his motion was to censure the Chief Secretary, and to transfer the reins of government to abler hands. Grattan supported the motion, but it was negatived without a division.[2]

On the 28th, Mr. Vandeleur proposed a tax of two shillings in the pound on the rents of absentees. He made an admirable and unanswerable speech on the proposal, which he described as a measure of resource and also of policy. Ireland, he said, is at the end of her resources. Our debt amounts to ten millions, our taxes to two millions. All ranks of men have been called upon to contribute to the support of the country, save the Absentee alone. We have called upon the peasant, "the most miserable on the face of the earth," to contribute by a tax on his brogues, and we now again call upon him to pay a tax of cent. per cent. on his salt. Last year, we taxed the higher classes by a duty on their wines, and now we increase that tax. The absentee alone pays no taxes. By residing in England, he evades the Irish taxes on consumption, and, his estate being in Ireland, he escapes the English land tax. The absentees have performed not one of the social duties which every one owes to his country, either as a landlord attentive to the interests of his tenantry, or as a magistrate. All the disturbances, which for half a century have disgraced the country and checked its growth, have invariably commenced on the estates of absentees: who, if they had remained in their own country, might have restrained the licentious and encouraged the industrious. In 1783, an estimate had been made of their rentals, which then amounted to £1,227,480. Since that time, rents have risen, and their rentals at the present time may be estimated at £1,500,000, on which sum a tax of two shillings in the pound would give £150,000. This beneficial measure was opposed by, among others, Lord Castlereagh on most ludicrous grounds. The right of property, he urged, "was paramount to the State—the State was instituted but to protect it, and therefore it cannot justly affect it." The proposal was rejected by 122 to 49; but it was rejected, because the Parliament was unwilling to offend a powerful party in that kingdom to which its members now looked for protection.[1]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvii., pp. 360-365.

[2] *Ib.*, pp. 366-371.

On the 2nd of March, a proclamation was issued by the

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvii., pp. 379, 403.

Lord-Lieutenant in council, ordering the directors of the Bank of Ireland to suspend payments in specie until the sense of Parliament should be taken on the subject.[1] The Bank at once complied, at the same time informing the public that its affairs were in a very prosperous condition. On the following day, the bankers, merchants and traders of the city of Dublin met and passed a resolution declaring their readiness to accept the notes of the Bank of Ireland and of the other bankers in payment of any sum of money. This order of the Lord Lieutenant was subsequently sanctioned by Parliament.[2]

One of the many evils inherent in the system of Parliamentary Government is the weakness of the Executive in times of danger. The party in power dreads every breath of censure, and lives in fear of the Opposition. To secure the continuance of its existence, and to avoid alarming voters, who, from their position, can have no knowledge of State affairs, it shrinks from strong measures, and seeks its safety in blameless inaction, at a time when speedy and decisive action is absolutely necessary. The Duke of Portland, actuated by feelings of this kind, and ignorant of the condition of Ireland, had expressed doubts as to the wisdom of passing the Insurrection Act, and thereby had restrained the Irish Government from adopting further measures which they considered necessary for the restoration of law and order. But the dreadful state of the North compelled that Government to disregard such criticism, and endeavour to arrest the progress of murder, terror and intimidation which prevailed in Ulster. On the 3rd of March, 1797, the Chief Secretary, on behalf of the Lord-Lieutenant, wrote an official letter to General Lake, then in Belfast, ordering him to disarm all persons within his district except those who bore his Majesty's commission, or were acting under officers so commissioned. Lake was also authorised to employ force against persons assembled in arms; to disperse all tumultuous assemblies, though unarmed, without waiting for the sanction of the civil power, if he considered the peace of the realm or the safety of the King's subjects endangered by waiting for such sanction; and to consider those parts, where the outrages had been committed, as being in a state that required all the measures of exertion and precaution, which a country depending upon military force alone for its protection, required.[1]

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[1] A similar order had been issued by the Privy Council in London on the previous 26th of February.

[2] *Irish Debates*, xvii., 404-5. Seward's *Collectanea Hibernica* iii., p. 186.

This letter set forth the reasons of its issue. In the counties of Down, Antrim, Tyrone, Derry and Donegal, secret and treasonable associations still continued to an alarming degree, the members of which attempted to defeat all the exertions of the loyal and well-disposed by a system of terror; they threatened the lives of all who ventured to discover their treason; assembled in great numbers by night, and by threats and force disarmed the peaceful inhabitants; fired upon magistrates who endeavoured to apprehend them when on their nocturnal robberies; threatened by papers, letters and notices, all who should in any manner resist them; on their nightly excursions to disarm the loyalists they disguised themselves; endeavoured to collect great stores of arms in concealed places; cut down great numbers of trees on the estates of the gentry for the purpose of making pikes; stole great quantities of lead to cast bullets; exercised themselves by night in the practice of arms; intimidated persons from joining the yeomanry, and refused to employ those who had enlisted in that force: they not only threatened, but ill-treated the persons of the yeomanry, and even attacked their houses by night, and proceeded to the barbarous extremity of deliberate and shocking murder; and professed a resolution to assist the enemies of the King, if they should be enabled to land in the kingdom.

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[1] Mr. Lecky says that this letter placed Ulster under martial law. But disarming a locality, and placing it under martial law, are two very different things. Martial law at once displaces all civil courts, and transfers their power and authority to the officer commanding the troops in the district. This letter had no such effect.

The letter had been sent to General Lake three weeks before he acted on it.[1] Great secrecy was necessary to have the troops ready, and so disposed in different places as to make seizures at the same time, and render resistance ineffectual. It was not until the 13th of March that Lake issued his proclamation, appealing to the people to reflect on the ruin into which they were rushing, requiring all persons—except peace officers and those serving in a military capacity—to surrender the arms and ammunition in their possession to the nearest officer in command of King's troops, inviting all persons to give information touching concealed arms, and promising the full value of the arms so seized to the informer as a reward.[2]

On the 18th, the Chief Secretary delivered to the Commons a message from the Lord-Lieutenant, stating that the insurrectionary spirit manifested in some districts of Ulster had compelled him to issue a proclamation declaring those districts to be disturbed, and that he had given instructions to General Lake to assist the magistrates in disarming the inhabitants of those districts. Two days later, the House resolved itself into a committee to consider this message. Mr. Ogle moved an address to the Lord-Lieutenant promising him the hearty and cordial co-operation of the House. Grattan moved an amendment, expressing regret that the Lord-Lieutenant had issued an illegal order, and praying him to recall it. In his speech, he indulged in the seditious and inflammatory rant which had become habitual to him. Parliament, said he, was called upon to attaint a *people* for high treason on a charge preferred by a *Minister*. An Irish Parliament was called on to take the word of a Minister, and on that word, to attaint their country of treason; to attaint that armed people, who, to the sound of martial music, had carried the Parliament on their back, when the English Parliament had trampled on their rights, and had ravished them into the Temple of Freedom. He considered the order so illegal, that it could not be enforced against an individual without committing felony, or against the province of Ulster without committing high treason. He had read of the outrageous Acts of Charles I., James II., the Court of High Commission, the Star Chamber, and the imprisonment of the Bishops; but what were all these to the order of a Minister depriving a great province of its arms? Will you suffer, he asked, the deputy of an English Minister to disarm the Irish, to enslave your country, and disgrace her? Nothing is so silly as to show an extraordinary zeal to trample on the people to gratify the Government—a Government which has declared it will persist in proscribing the Catholics, and now consigns the Protestants to military execution. Remember America, which separated on account of violent laws and military execution.[1] Are the Acts which you have passed with regard to Ireland milder or more constitutional than the proceedings or the Acts passed against America? I would appeal to the King and people of England. If the English Court is insensible to its danger, I would appeal to the Opposition and Lord Moira. I appeal to Mr. Fox, who may preserve the love of Ireland to Britain by opposing gigantic abilities to gigantic despotism. Ulster may depend upon it that this system cannot last; the continuance of the present Ministry is improbable, and a new Ministry will abandon the coercion, terror, and anarchy of the present. He ended by saying,—"that Ulster would recover her liberty," he wished and believed. "The same Providence, that led by the hand through the desert another persecuted tribe, will conduct them through the horrors by which they are surrounded."[1]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvii., p. 160.

[2] The letter of the Chief Secretary and Lake's proclamation are in the Appendix to the report from the Commons' secret committee, 1798.

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[1] America appears regularly in Grattan's speeches. As William Smith told him, "It is the Othello's handkerchief, with which you reply to arguments and facts—and record your incurable jealousy of England" (*Letter to Henry Grattan*, 1800). This is one of three pamphlets published by this gentleman, who was afterward a Baron of the Exchequer, which are absolutely necessary to a student of the later history of Ireland before the Union.

George Ponsonby attempted to explain away his leader's attack on the independence of the Irish Parliament, and went beyond him in his praise of the Northern rebels. The people of Ulster, he said, have committed two crimes; they have buried their bigotry, and have discovered that the representation of Ireland, after having been mangled, mutilated and corrupted by a succession of English viceroys is not such as a free nation has the right to expect; and for these crimes they have been persecuted. He honoured and applauded them; he would support them in their pursuit of reform, and would advise them to make all the resistance, which the law allowed, to the exercise of a dispensing power, and the execution of illegal orders.

The answer to all this encouragement of traitors was, the law could not be enforced in the province of Ulster. Grattan's amendment was rejected by 127 to 16.[2]

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[1] This sentence must be badly reported, for Alexander Knox says it was a prayer: "These [United Irishmen] are they for whom the *Paragon* of Irish eloquence offered up his fervent prayer to Heaven, that the same Providence which conducted another persecuted tribe through the desert, may lead these victims of oppression also through the horrors with which they are surrounded" (*Political Essays*, p. 163).

[2] *Irish Debates*, xvii., pp. 129-173.

In 1785, Grattan, with the cry, "Perish the Empire, live the Constitution" in his mouth, caused the commercial treaty to be rejected, on the ground that it infringed upon the independence of the Irish Parliament. This treaty would have strengthened the Protestant community greatly by uniting it in the friendly bonds of trade and commerce with Great Britain. In 1789 he induced the Irish Parliament to choose a Regent of their own, in violation of Irish law, on the pretence that, being independent, it ought not to receive a Regent appointed by the Imperial Parliament. Now, disappointed in his schemes and neglected, he advocated the exercise by the British Parliament of an appellate jurisdiction over the proceedings of his native Parliament, and justified this attack on Irish independence by the flimsy argument that the conduct of the Irish Parliament endangered the connection between the two countries, and that the connection was a question of Empire, and therefore a question for the British Parliament. Nor was this the only occasion on which he urged this doctrine, so destructive of the very idea of independent Irish legislation. Later in the session, Dr. Duigenan produced a published speech of Fox, which was justly considered a libel on the Irish Parliament, and desired the Commons to express their opinion of it. Grattan defended the libel, and asserted the propriety of appeals from the Parliament of Ireland to that of Great Britain.[1]

At this time Fox and Grattan were acting in concert. Grattan had been instructing the English politician on the state of Ireland, and instilling into his ear his own mistaken ideas. Of all men, Grattan was the blindest to the real condition of his country. Of her situation, of her wants and of the dangers which threatened her he had not a conception. He was, at this period, in the hands of the Dublin leaders of the Roman Catholics, who were United Irishmen, and derived all his information from them. So much was he influenced by these men that, two months later, he introduced a plan of reform which had been approved by them, and which was wholly different from that proposed by him only three years before. In Grattan's opinion, to use his own words, Government was a malevolent power that "blooded the magistracy with the poor man's liberty, and employed the rich, like a pack of Government bloodhounds, to hunt down the poor,"[1] and the nightly murders, conflagrations and robberies of the Defenders and United Irishmen arose from "the spirit of political reformation carried to different degrees; to liberty in most instances, to ambition in others, and to power in others."[2] We may easily guess the nature of the instruction he conveyed to Fox.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvii., pp. 490-508.

On the 23rd of March, that is three days after Grattan had appealed to the Opposition in the Imperial Parliament, Fox called the attention of the British Commons to the state of Ireland. The speech he delivered on this occasion was principally founded on the facts and arguments furnished by Grattan.[3] No speech could have been more ill-timed and mischievous, or better adapted to cause dissensions between the legislatures of the two countries. It was a direct attack upon the independence of the Irish Parliament, and bristled with misstatements, which, if the matters touched on had been in the knowledge of the speaker, would have been justly termed falsehoods. The settlement of 1782, he said, had not been followed by the happy results expected from it, and this circumstance "loudly called on the British Parliament to inquire how it had not been attended by these beneficial effects". The Roman Catholics had been kept in a worse situation than they had been formerly. The discontents in the North had been caused by the pressure of the war and by abuses in the Constitution. Numerous respectable Roman Catholics had been prosecuted for high treason, with the object of convincing the general body that they were marked out as the victims of the most cruel proscriptions and oppressions. The Executive in Ireland favoured the exclusion of Roman Catholics from Corporations. Ireland was now in the same position as America was in 1774, and if her people chose to resist, a contest must ensue, the result of which would be doubtful. The character of the Northerns had been maligned; they were of the old leaven that rescued the country from the tyranny of Charles I. and James II., and defended the principles of liberty; if these principles had been carried to excess, the oppression they had suffered was some apology. They have been provoked, they have been declared out of the king's peace, and have seen their friends taken up on an accusation of high treason. Finally, the old falsehood respecting a statement made by Lord Clare was not absent. He concluded this budget of misrepresentations and encouragement to the Northern traitors, by proposing an address to the King that he would take into consideration the disturbed state of Ireland, and adopt such measures as would restore tranquillity to that country.[1]

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[1] *Grattan's Address to his Fellow Citizens*, Dublin, 1797, p. 10.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 20.

[3] "If the newspapers have given a tolerably fair account of my speech upon the affairs of Ireland, you will doubtless have remarked that I have proceeded principally upon the facts and arguments with which you furnished me" (Fox to Grattan, 7th of April, 1797. *Grattan's Life*, iv., p. 315).

Some of these misstatements may be noticed. The Roman Catholics of Ireland, instead of being in a worse condition than formerly, were in a situation far superior to that of Protestant Dissenters in England. The Test Act had been repealed in their favour, except as to seats in Parliament and about thirty of the highest executive offices in the State. The Corporation Act had also been repealed in their favour. The war had brought with it no pressure on the inhabitants of the North; on the contrary, their linen trade had nearly doubled in consequence of the annihilation, by the war, of the same manufacture in Holland and the Netherlands. It was not true that any "person of high consideration" had ever recommended a Government by corruption: or that Government had interfered for the purpose of inducing Corporations to exclude Roman Catholics. It was shameful to justify the murders, burnings and robberies in the North by stating that they had been provoked by the disarming order, when that order had been extorted from a timid Government by outrages that disgraced that province. If, as Pitt said, the speech meant anything, it meant that the British Parliament should take up the cause of the people of Ireland against their own Parliament.

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[1] *Parliamentary History*, xxxiii., p. 139.

In his letter of the 7th of April to Grattan, Fox had suggested that, nothing was more likely "to give us a chance of salvation" than "a general expression on the part of the people of Ireland, of their wish for the removal of Ministers, or perhaps of Pitt personally." Before this letter had arrived in Dublin, Grattan and the Ponsonbys had managed to bring about a meeting for the purpose of petitioning the king to dismiss his Ministers. The meeting was alleged to be composed of the freemen and freeholders of the city of Dublin, but one of the Sheriffs was decidedly of opinion "that there were numbers at the meeting not entitled to vote." On the motion of a United Irishman, Grattan took the second chair, and signed the petition, the High Sheriffs having refused to do so. The petition was stuffed with Grattan's misstatements, among which appeared the reiterated falsehood, that the corruption of Parliament had been publicly advocated.[1]

On the 14th of April, Colonel Barber, with a party of soldiers, surrounded the house of one John Alexander, an innkeeper in Belfast, where two societies of United Irishmen were sitting, and arrested twenty-one of the members. Their papers, which disclosed the existence of a very formidable conspiracy, were also seized.[2] A few days later, the Chief Secretary delivered to the Commons a message from the Lord-Lieutenant, stating these facts, and requesting the House to take the papers into their serious consideration. He then proposed that they should be submitted to a secret committee, inasmuch as they might afterwards be required as evidence, and their publication might defeat the ends of justice. Grattan objected to the committee being secret. To commit, said he, the lives and properties of the people of Ireland to a secret committee, was in effect to put their lives and fortunes into the hands of the Minister at a time when his own misconduct was the subject of general complaint in both countries. This fustian had no effect, and a committee was appointed in such a way as to exclude all management. It was elected by ballot, each member giving in fifteen names, and the fifteen who had a majority of votes formed the committee.[3] The committee not only examined the papers, but also witnesses on oath, and on the 10th of May, the report was laid before the Houses.[4]

[1] Seward's *Collectanea Hibernica*, iii., pp. 192-196.

[2] *Belfast Hist. Collections*, p. 462.

[3] *Irish Debates*, xvii, p. 578.

[4] Mr. Lecky says [viii, p. 31], that the Government "stated their own case" in the report of the secret committee. This remark shows the spirit in which this gentleman compiled his volumes. The report he refers to is that published in this year, 1797, by the secret committee of the Commons. The Government had nothing whatever to do with this report beyond laying the papers seized in Belfast before the House of Commons.

From these papers and the oral evidence, it appeared that the Society of United Irishmen was very completely organised. The lowest constituent part of it was the baronial committee, consisting of those members who lived in the same barony. When this committee became too numerous, it was divided into two. When a county contained three or more baronial committees, these elected members to form a county committee. If two or more counties had such committees within them, they elected members to form a provincial committee. And when two provincial committees were formed, each elected five members to form a national committee. The different committees were empowered to raise money, and distribute it in certain ways, such as purchasing arms and ammunition: supplying members who had suffered by imprisonment or otherwise, with necessaries and the means of defence: and providing for the widows and families of members. They also regulated the election of military officers, tried suspected persons, and determined their punishment even to death. Some of the papers contained accurate returns of the numbers of members, specifying the counties, towns and districts from which they came. Thus one provincial report returned the number of men furnished by the ten Northern counties at 99,411. The numbers of guns, bayonets, swords, pikes, cannon and the quantities of powder, ball-cartridges and bullets were also given. In one Belfast report it was stated that it had been made sooner than usual "on account of our friends being expected soon into Bantry," and a county committee resolved that, if any United Irishmen were on a jury which committed any prisoner for belonging to their society, they "ought to lose their existence." Orders were given to all the members, in the hopes of diminishing the resources of the State, to abstain from the consumption of excisable articles, and to prevent the circulation of bank notes. Every effort was made to depreciate the value of Government securities; and warnings were directed to the associates that they should conduct themselves circumspectly, lest Government should "put them down, and prevent them rising for a hundred years." Great care was taken to form the companies and battalions in such a way as that the officers and men should be mutually known to each other. Provisions were also made for the establishment of courts of law, when the revolution should begin, and for the appointment of magistrates, who were to act in concert with a revolutionary committee. These magistrates were to continue in office for six months only, except re-elected; "but, if a revolution is accomplished, an annual election shall take place".

Two days after the appearance of this report, another from the secret committee of the House of Lords was issued. This committee also took oral evidence in addition to the examination of the papers seized in Belfast, and the evidence laid before it fully supported the report of the Commons' committee. One appalling fact mentioned in the report of the Lords' committee sent a thrill of horror through the country. It appeared that, in the event of success, it had been decided by the United Irishmen to massacre all persons who, from their principles or situation, might be deemed hostile to their Society, and that the first list of the proscribed had been calculated by one of their leaders at 30,000 persons.[1] In considering this terrible accusation we must remember that two of the chief leaders of the United Irishmen, when examined before the House of Lords in 1798, acknowledged that the reports of which we are now speaking were accurate. Dr. MacNeven was asked: "Were the reports of the secret committees of the two Houses of Parliament last year accurate?" His reply was: "I believe they were accurate, save that they understated the numbers of men and arms." Oliver Bond, when asked the same question, replied: "I think they were." Not one word of indignant repudiation of this horrible charge ever fell from the lips of any United Irishman when examined before either House of Parliament.[1]

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[1] "The plan of massacre seems to raise the strongest emotions of horror and detestation, and the bulk of the country are now convinced that their leaders have from the beginning deceived them in almost every particular."—Rev. Edward Hudson to Lord Charlemont (*Charlemont MSS. and Correspondence*, ii., p. 304).

These reports had an excellent effect on the country, and ought to be enumerated among the causes of the failure of a great and widespread conspiracy. They completely justified the conduct of the Government, and made manifest that it was not legislation which was required, but that force alone could restore tranquillity. For the first time the full extent of the designs of the leaders of the United Irishmen were revealed to their followers. A vast number had been deluded by the generous hope of a union of all sects, and these were now furnished with sufficient reasons for withdrawing from such designs. The reports also at once divided the remainder into two parties, namely, those who had some compunctions respecting massacres and confiscation, and that party which was resolved to carry out their measures at any cost of ruin and carnage.

After the publication of the reports of these committees Grattan and the rest of the Opposition could no longer plead reason or justice for still dissenting from every measure of severity against those who had decreed a general confiscation and the massacre of 30,000 persons.[2]

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[1] As said before, the Report of the Lords' secret committee in 1798 was published separately. It may be found among the Haliday pamphlets in the library of the Royal Irish Academy.

[2] "And yet this man [Grattan] has talked of consistency! When, after the report of the secret committees, he could no longer plead reason, or

Yet at this time some kind of negotiation took place between the Opposition and the United Irishmen respecting a plan of Reform such as would please the latter.[1] Accordingly, on the 15th of May, William Ponsonby submitted the scheme so agreed upon to the House of Commons in a few words, leaving its author[2] [Grattan] to explain and defend its provisions. Though all the United Irishmen who were examined on oath before the committee of the House of Lords, in 1798, admitted that the emancipation of the Roman Catholics had been from the first a mere pretence,[3] we now find Grattan making the admission of Roman Catholics, without any test, into Parliament and the highest offices of the State, a portion of his scheme, and declaring it to be fundamental to an adequate representation. The plan, which was now laid before the Commons, was not a reform, but a complete subversion of the existing Constitution. It destroyed the whole system of representation, except in the counties, and altered the entire electorate. At one blow, it deprived all Corporations of every kind, in cities, counties of cities, towns and boroughs, which enjoyed the privilege of returning re-

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justice, or expediency for his still dissenting from every measure of severity against those who had decreed a general confiscation and the massacre of 30,000, he tried to prop himself on the ground of consistency. But does he feel it no violation of consistency to *flatter* and *defend* those traitors to whose suppression he was once ready [had it been proved necessary] to sacrifice even the attempt at moderate reform ?" (Alexander Knox, *Political Essays*, p. 166).

[1] Compare the younger Grattan's hesitating statements on this matter with the positive assertion of Thomas Emmet. *Grattan's Life*, iv., p. 285; *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 188; and his statements in Dowdall's letter to Grattan, *Grattan's Life*, iv., p. 409.

[2] As to this point see *Grattan's Life*, iv., p. 409.

[3] "As to Catholic emancipation [as it is called], it was admitted *by them all* [Arthur O'Connor, Thomas A. Emmet, William MacNeven and Oliver Bond] to have been a mere pretence from the first establishment of the Irish Union" (Report from the secret committee of the House of Lords, 1798).

presentatives to Parliament, of their franchises: and disfranchised all freemen in them.

In imitation of the scheme of Reform proposed by the United Irishmen, the whole kingdom was to be divided into districts, each district to contain 5,000 houses.[1] As by the hearth-money books, the whole country was computed to contain 700,000 houses, counting every cabin a house, it would be divided into 140 districts, each of which was to return two representatives to Parliament, amounting in all to 280 members. The county representation and mode of election were not to be altered, so that the whole number of members in the House of Commons would amount to 344: in other words, an addition of forty-four representatives was to be made to that House. To get rid of the influence of property, no man, who had houses or lands in different parts of the country, was allowed to vote in more than one district; this was also taken from the plan of the United Irishmen, which directed "that no person should have a right to vote in more than one electorate and at the same election". The second paragraph of Grattan's scheme declared, "that it is an ancient and undoubted right of the people of Ireland to be fully and fairly represented in Parliament". To secure this right to the people, an enormous expansion of the electorate was devised. Not only forty-shilling freeholders, but lessees for years, householders, freemen by birth, marriage or election, and tradesmen were to vote for the 280 representatives of the new districts. This alteration of the electorate was calculated in a very able book,[2] which will be mentioned later on, as certain to raise the number of electors from less than 80,000 to more than 700,000. The Irish Commons had already complied with the wishes of moderate reformers by adopting various laws tending to assimilate the Irish to the English Constitution, such as the Place Act, the Pension Act, and the abolition of the Hereditary Revenue, but as they were resolved not to commit the folly of "unroofing their house in a hurricane," Grattan's plan was rejected by 170 to 30.[1]

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[1] Compare this provision with that mentioned in the first paragraph of the plan of the United Irishmen: "That the nation, for the purpose of representation solely, should be divided into 330 electorates, formed by combinations of parishes, and as nearly as possible equal in point of population".

[2] Duigenan's *Answer to Grattan*, p. 273.

As was said in the House, this scheme was the crudest and most delusive of all the projects of Reform which had been devised by man. It was not only destructive of the existing Constitution, but was absurd and impracticable. Local population is of a fluctuating nature, and changes in it are constantly taking place. The number of inhabitants in cities, towns and villages, varies continually. As the kingdom was to be divided, not on geographical lines, but by the number of houses, the limits of each district would be constantly varying according to the changes in its population. Let us suppose the population of one district, surrounded by others, to have increased or diminished by one-half, or by a lesser proportion. How could the limits of this district, after such a change, be ascertained? Were the districts, which surrounded it, to be pushed in and pushed out according to the decrease or increase of the population in the enclosed district? And was this compression or dilation to be progressive, and to be felt in all the districts in the kingdom? In addition to this difficulty, the want of defined and certain limits would give rise to perpetual disputes and quarrels at every election, and with the shifting of the districts, would create inextricable confusion.

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xvii., pp. 530-570.

What Grattan's object was in presenting this democratic plan to Parliament, when he knew it would not be listened to, it is impossible to say. That he was sinning against his convictions, we need no other proof than his own declarations only three years before. When the danger from the United Irishmen was comparatively trifling he had denounced their plan of Reform, because it added very largely to the electorate, and had laid great stress on the fact that more than one-half of the people of Ireland were exempted, on account of their poverty, from paying hearth-money—a tax of one halfpenny a week.[1] Now, when the United Irishmen had raised a revolutionary army of 100,000 men, and had decreed a general confiscation and the massacre of 30,000 suspects, he was acting in concert with these traitors, and proposing a plan of reform similar to that which he had denounced before his great disappointment in 1795. In his speech on the present occasion, he stated that the Opposition had sent the plan to persons who were much in the confidence of the people, and that it had been approved by them. He also read to the House a most insolent extract from what he described as "a paper signed by nine hundred persons, considerable men of business and Northern merchants," declaring, that the imperfect representation was the cause of the present discontent, and that they would persist in the pursuit of Reform until a plan satisfactory to them was adopted. This language, and the remarks of the younger Grattan on the subject, leave no doubt that the paper came from the United Irishmen.[2]

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[1] *Irish Debates*, xiv., p. 80. The tax on a house with only one hearth was two shillings and twopence annually.

[2] The younger Grattan says that certain resolutions, passed at a meeting in Belfast, led to the introduction of this plan of Reform, but he does not add that these resolutions were framed and passed by the United Irishmen (*Grattan's Life*, iv., p. 284). As to how these resolutions came to be passed at all, see *Belfast Historical Collections*, pp. 450-455; and also

Though Mr. Lecky does not venture to give the full details of this plan, he tells us that it was "very moderate".[1] But let us hear the opinions of men who knew what they were speaking about ; the one—the elder of the only two statesmen the Irish Parliament ever produced—the other, a very remarkable man, whose name and memory are still fresh among us. "Upon this plan of reform," said Lord Clare, "thus embracing the active citizens of Ireland, I shall only observe that the members of the rebel Irish Directory, Messrs. Arthur O'Connor, William James MacNeven, and Thomas Emmet, who were examined before the last secret committee of this House, did declare on their oaths the perfect satisfaction which it gave to them and to the other leaders of the late rebellion ; and certainly, most unreasonable traitors they must have been if it did not satisfy them to their hearts' content ; in truth, there is scarce a shade of difference between this plan of reform and one which had been just before promulgated under the authority of the rebel Union."[2] Alexander Knox termed this plan of the Opposition "that late proof of vile succumbency to even the vulgarities of democracy, their *new-modelled reform bill*, an instance of departure from their own former principles and professions, at once so absurd, so mean and so hypocritical, that the mover of such a bill, in order to be in character with his work, ought previously to have been *unpowdered* and *cropt*, and have named himself *Egalité*.[3]

A. Knox's address to the United Irishmen who joined in these resolutions *Political Essays*, pp. 124-136.

[1] "They [the Government] had resisted the very moderate reform bills of Ponsonby and Grattan" (vii., p. 363). The details he does give are entirely incorrect. He makes the districts to contain 6,000 houses, and creates £40 freeholds for the occasion (*Ib.*, p. 324).

[2] Speech in the House of Lords, 10th February, 1800. To this speech, when published separately, was annexed the plan of reform proposed by the United Irishmen.

[3] *Political Essays*, p. 192.

Towards the end of his speech, Grattan announced that he and his friends would retire from Parliament, as they had "no hopes left to persuade or dissuade". Accordingly, he, the Ponsonbys, Lord Henry Fitzgerald, Curran and a few others, withdrew from the House. This performance was eminently unreal, and was carried out in imitation of Fox, who, however, had *not* retired from Parliament, but merely suspended his attendance there. The plan had been pre-arranged, else no one member of the Opposition could have spoken of the general intention. This proceeding shows that the introduction of this revolutionary measure was a mere stage scene played by the Opposition. They had brought in their bill, without hopes of its passing, to please the United Irishmen by its democratic reform and the Roman Catholics by emancipation, and had, at the same time, determined to retire in a body as a protest against the measures of Government.[1]

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[1] The two Ponsonbys reappeared in the next Parliament, which was summoned for the 21st of August, 1797, but did not meet until January, 1798.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN ALLIANCE PROPOSED BY THE UNITED IRISHMEN TO THE ORANGEMEN—SECOND PROCLAMATION OF GENERAL LAKE—DEFEAT OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN IN THE NORTH—THE MUTINIES IN THE FLEETS—GRATTAN'S ADDRESS TO HIS FELLOW CITIZENS—THE ADDRESS OF BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT AND THAT OF THE CORPORATION OF DERRY TO THE LORD-LIEUTENANT.

About this time, that is, the spring of 1797, the Orangemen had greatly increased their numbers. The nobility and gentry of the country were flocking into this living protest against disloyalty and rebellion.[1] Even in Belfast they had established themselves, and on the 19th of June of this year published a declaration that they would support with their lives and fortunes the existing Constitution and the succesion to the throne.[2] A very numerous lodge, consisting of noblemen and gentlemen, was formed in Dublin during the same month.[3] The United Irishmen, fearing their growing strength, desired to effect a union with them. With this view, they proposed to the Orangemen of Armagh to contract an alliance with them. This proposal is curious reading. It commenced with a condemnation of the leaders who had led the Orangemen astray, and rioted themselves in luxury. Those leaders had encouraged religious dissensions in order to turn attention from their own misdeeds. "Have not the Ministry," it went on, "whose creatures your leaders avowedly are, overwhelmed us with debt and taxes in support of an unjust war, in which Ireland has no natural interest? They absolutely resist a Reform in Parliament; because, if the people were fairly represented, their abominable system of corruption must be annihilated. Consider now, on the other hand, what are the objects of United Irishmen; union, peace, love, mutual forbearance, universal charity, and the active exercise of every social virtue. . . . Already, we have forgiven you the injuries you have committed against us. We offer you the right hand of fellowship, and entreat you to co-operate with us in that great work, which we are able to effect whether you aid us or not."

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[1] Mr. Lecky's accounts of the Orange system are very inconsistent. In one place (vii., p. 177) he says: "It was at first a league of mutual defence, binding its members to maintain the laws and peace of the country, and also the Protestant Constitution". But he soon changes his mind, and at page 308 his words are: "At first, as we have seen, Orangism was simply a form of outrage."

[2] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 475.

[3] Report of the select committee on Orange lodges, etc., p. 252.

This proposal, coming from men who had exhausted slander in defaming the most loyal body in the kingdom, and who had fabricated and disseminated through the country false oaths represented to have been taken by Orangemen for the extermination of the Roman Catholics,[1] was rejected with scorn. The answer of the Orangemen is dated the 21st of May, six days after Grattan's revolutionary reform had been introduced into the House of Commons. "Your plans and schemes are now before the select committees of the Lords and Commons, and such measures, we trust, will be adopted as will purge the land of your ringleaders. In future, we desire ye will not call us friends as you have done in your last letter. We will not be your friends until you forsake your evil ways, and until we see some mark of contrition for your past conduct; neither do we wish to hold any intercourse with you, for evil communication corrupts good morals as well as good manners. We are satisfied in the enjoyment of what we earn by our honest industry, and neither envy those above us, nor desire to take from them a single farthing of their property;[1] we wish you to be of the same mind."[2]

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[1] Report of the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

The proclamation, issued by General Lake on the 13th of March, had but little effect. Of the quantity of arms which appeared, by their own reports, to be in the hands of the United Irishmen, comparatively few were obtained by the search then made in Ulster. In carrying this search into execution "no acts of severity whatever were used by the military towards persons concealing or refusing to give up their arms; but, on the contrary, the search for the arms of the disaffected was conducted with all possible mildness; and where persons voluntarily brought in their arms, certificates were granted by the magistrate, and assurances given to the people that their arms would be returned as soon as the country was restored to tranquillity".[3] The usual effects of attempting to conciliate the irreconcilable followed. Such gentleness only encouraged the United Irishmen, and, in the month of April, acts of violence of every description became more frequent, and were at the same time so systematically directed to prevent the course of justice against the United Irishmen, that the Crown prosecutions in the disturbed counties proved, from their failure, an encouragement rather than a restraint upon the treasonable projects of that party.[1] These outrages, the failure of the former proclamation, and the report of the secret committee, which disclosed the vast extent of the conspiracy, necessitated a fresh proclamation which appeared on the 17th of May. This proclamation stated that the United Irishmen had made secret arrangements for raising, arming and paying a disciplined force; they had frequently assembled in large bodies and plundered of arms the houses of many loyal subjects; they had attempted to disarm the yeomanry, and had fired upon several bodies of the King's forces; the civil power had proved unequal to suppress the conspiracy and to protect the lives and properties of the loyal subjects; it was therefore necessary to employ the military force for the immediate suppression of the rebellious and traitorous attempts made against the peace and dignity of the Crown and the safety of the King's loyal subjects: orders were given to all military officers to use their utmost endeavours in suppressing all traitorous, tumultuous and unlawful assemblies, and in discovering offensive weapons and ammunition. The proclamation also offered a free pardon to all persons who had joined the conspiracy, with the exception of those who had been guilty of certain enumerated crimes, provided they surrendered themselves to a magistrate before the 24th of June, took the oath of allegiance, and entered into recognisance to keep the peace.[2]

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[1] Report of the select committee on Orange lodges, pp. 15-17.

[2] On the 25th of February, 1798, the Orangemen presented an address to the Lord-Lieutenant, asserting their attachment to the King and the Constitution in Church and State, and their gratitude for the blessings they enjoyed under the Government. "We declare most solemnly," the address proceeded, "that we are not enemies to any body of people on account of their religion, their faith or mode of worship. We consider every peaceable and loyal subject our brother, and they shall have our aid and protection. Anxious to co-operate in preserving internal tranquillity and repelling invasion, should our foreign enemies be desperate enough to attempt it, we take this opportunity of declaring our readiness to undertake any duty in obedience to the commands of his Excellency, the Lord-Lieutenant." This address was signed by ten persons on behalf of some thousands (Report of the select committee on Orange lodges, p. 10).

[3] Report of the Commons' secret committee, 1798.

On the other hand the United Irishmen were not idle.

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[1] Report of the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

[2] This proclamation is Appendix No. 10 to the Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

They issued a "Caution to the Brethren"[1] not to accept bank-notes, for "when the Government *goes down*, these fine notes of theirs with stamps of *hundreds and thousands* upon them, will not fetch *a penny a pound* at a snuff-shop." They warned "the landed and monied interests of Ireland" against purchasing the quit-rents which the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed to sell, as "no such fraudulent transaction, consuming by anticipation the resources and future revenues of the nation, would be sufficient to stand good in the event of a revolution and a free legislature."[2] And they also published an address to their own[3] members, recommending perfect sobriety; "by abstaining totally from the use of *spirituous liquors*, you will destroy the excise, which is the only branch of revenue remaining, from which is produced *the principal strength of government.*" In April of this year, they sent a Dublin attorney, Edward John Lewins, to France, to be their accredited agent, resident in Paris, in order to establish a regular communication with the French Directory. This agent was instructed to request from that body a force not exceeding 10,000 nor less than 5,000 men, with 40,000 stand of arms, and a proportionate supply of artillery, ammunition, engineers and experienced officers.[4] Notwithstanding the demand for foreign aid, a plan was seriously discussed about this time, among the leaders of the United Irishmen, then assembled in Dublin, for commencing a general rising without waiting for French assistance. This plan did not meet with the approbation of the Dublin part of the executive, and was therefore given up. The Northerns then in Dublin, disgusted with the cowardice of the Leinster delegates, proposed to act without their approbation, to seize upon the Castle, ordnance stores, magazine, etc., and to trust to the mob of Dublin for assistance; but from some additional military precautions, at that time adopted in the garrison, this plan was abandoned.[1]

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[1] Appendix, p. 28 to the Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

[2] *Ib.*

[3] Appendix, p. 25, *Ib.*

[4] Report of the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

Though the Leinster executive discouraged all rash attempts without the assistance of France, and though assurances had been received of the preparations at Brest and in the Texel for an invasion of Ireland, an active effort was made, after the issue of the proclamation of the 17th of May, to produce a general insurrection throughout Ulster, and the plan of attack for each county was arranged. The intention became known, and was defeated by the military measures taken by General Lake. A partial rising did actually take place near the Mourne mountains in the county of Down; but the insurgents, finding themselves unsupported, gradually melted away, and many of their principal leaders were obliged to fly.[2]

In June, the executive of the United Irishmen, apprehensive lest a premature insurrection in the North, before the arrival of the succours from France, might disappoint their prospects, determined to send a second agent to Paris, to press with increased urgency the immediate despatch of the promised assistance. Accordingly, a most confidential member of the body, Dr MacNeven, who had hitherto acted as secretary to the executive, was sent on this mission. MacNeven left Dublin in June, and presented himself with his letters of credence to the French Minister at Hamburg. Meeting with some difficulty in obtaining a passport to Paris, he delivered to the Minister a memoir to be forwarded to the French Directory. Soon after the delivery of this memoir, MacNeven obtained a passport and proceeded directly to Paris, where he had several conferences with some of the French Ministers, and presented a second memoir, urging them to invade Ireland and to continue the war with Great Britain until Ireland should be separated from the British Crown.[1] MacNeven, when examined on oath, the 7th of August, 1798, fully detailed the contents of these memoirs.[2]

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[1] Report of the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

[2] *Ib.*

The first memoir stated that the appearance of the French in Bantry Bay had encouraged the least confident of the Irish, and proved the facility of an invasion; that Oyster Haven was the best place of debarkation if the object was to take Cork; that the United System had made rapid progress in the county of Cork, and the town of Bandon had become a second Belfast; that 150,000 United Irishmen were enrolled in Ulster, a great part of them regimented, and a third part ready to march out of the province; it detailed the number of the King's troops in Ulster, and recommended Lough-Swilly or Killybegs as favourable places for landing in the North. It mentioned that the counties of Tyrone, Fermanagh and Monaghan were among the best affected to the cause, and that the counties of Louth, Armagh, Westmeath, Kildare, King's County and Dublin were the best organised; that the priests had ceased to be alarmed by the irreligion of the French, and were well affected to the cause, and that some of them had rendered great service in propagating with discreet zeal the system of the Irish Union; it engaged to reimburse the French the expenses of the former expedition, and of any other which might be undertaken; the number of troops demanded was not more than 10,000, nor less than 5,000, together with a large quantity of artillery and ammunition, a numerous staff and body of engineers, and as many Irish officers as possible: it stated that a brigade of English artillery had been sent over, and that large forces would follow if Ireland were invaded; it recommended that the French general on landing should publish a proclamation declaring that the French came as allies and not to conquer the country; and that the French Directory should make the separation of Ireland from Great Britain an indispensable condition of the treaty of peace then pending at Lisle, as such a proceeding would encourage the Irish in their efforts to achieve a revolution. Finally, it gave an assurance that the Irish militia would desert to the French, if they landed in force.

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[1] Report of the Lords' secret committee, 1798.

[2] Appendix, No. iii. to the Report of the Lords' secret committee, 1798.

On his arrival in Paris, MacNeven presented a second memoir to the Directory, again urging the necessity of an immediate invasion, and of making the independence of Ireland an indispensable condition of any treaty of peace. This agent was also instructed, as Lewins had been before, to negotiate a loan of half a million, or at least of three hundred thousand pounds for the immediate use of the United Irishmen, on the security of the lands of the Church and the property of all those who should oppose the measures of the party. If France refused to advance so large a sum, MacNeven was directed to address himself to the Court of Spain, but in this object he failed completely.[1]

But all the efforts of the United Irishmen in the North were defeated by the wise action of Government. The attempt to excite an insurrection in June, which had been foiled by the military precautions of General Lake,[2] proved that the former search for arms had been comparatively ineffectual. More vigorous measures, yet absolutely necessary for the public security, were resorted to under the authority of the proclamation of the 17th of May; while, at the same time, the offer of pardon contained in that proclamation was extended to the 24th of July.[1] The effects of these measures were immediate and very extraordinary. The appearance of the military in every part of the province in their search for arms put an end to the terror which had long silenced the voices of the loyalists. The deluded, the intimidated, and all those who had been awakened out of their dream of Union by the schemes of confiscation and massacre, rejoiced to see the door opened for their escape. Immense quantities of arms were seized or delivered up voluntarily throughout the North. The penitent flocked in by thousands to take the oath of allegiance. The magistrates could hardly find time to administer the oath.[2] In Belfast, they were obliged to sit every day for this purpose.[3] A sudden and astonishing reaction took place in the North. Outrage ceased, and public confidence was so far restored throughout Ulster that the laws were administered with effect in the different counties during the autumn.[4] The manufacturing industry was restored to its usual vigour during the remainder of the year. The civil authority was fully adequate to preserve the public peace, and all military interference was generally discontinued.[1]

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[1] Examination of MacNeven, Lords' secret report, Appendix III. Report of the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

[2] Even the blameless hero of Delhi and Lasswaree, who was afterwards so beloved by his soldiery in the East as to be called their father, cannot escape the censure of Mr. Lecky. Lake disarmed the United Irishmen, and was therefore "associated with the abuses which Abercromby had tried to check" (vii., p. 438).

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[1] Renewed proclamation, 22nd June, 1797. Report of the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798, Appendix, p. 13.

[2] "Thousands are yet unsworn for want of time," Rev. Edward Hudson, from Ballymena in the county Antrim, 25th of June, to Charlemont (*Charlemont MSS.*, ii., p. 301).

[3] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 474.

[4] Mr. Lecky tells us that "acts of illegal, criminal, shameful and exasperating violence were at this time committed in Ireland with the full sanction of Government" (vii., p. 418). Such an assertion ought never to have been made save on the strongest and clearest evidence. Yet no authority is cited for it. There is no reason whatever to believe that this statement is correct.

The success of the Government greatly discouraged the United Irishmen. The inferior societies discontinued their meetings. Several counties for some months refused to send delegates to the provincial committee; little money was collected; and the people applied themselves to their ordinary occupations. Though some of the higher committees were kept alive by the exertions of active leaders, they could not revive the inferior societies, or make any impression on them till the insurrection in Leinster was on the point of breaking out. Even then, the feebleness of the efforts made in the North manifested the good effects of the measures taken by the Government in this year, 1797. During the rebellion, the Presbyterians had an opportunity of seeing how the Roman Catholics observed their solemn promise as United Irishmen, "to form a brotherhood of affection". They learned too late, as James Dickey, the leader of the Antrim insurgents, declared before his execution, that if they had succeeded in their designs, they would have had to fight a second time for their own safety.[2] The lesson sank deep into their minds. Shocked by the ferocious bigotry of the Wexford priests and peasants, they renounced an association which had proved so delusive and so disastrous. The insurrection of Emmet, in 1803, afforded them an opportunity of showing the great alteration which had taken place in their political sentiments. A numerous meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast expressed "their horror at this nefarious attempt to disturb the peace of Ireland". Two volunteer corps, whose officers were appointed by the Lord-Lieutenant, were immediately raised, and many of those who had formerly been active agitators appeared in the ranks.[1] Since that period the Presbyterians have been among the firmest supporters of the close connection between Great Britain and Ireland, and of the unity of the empire.

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[1] Report of the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

[2] *Belfast Historical Collection*, Preface.

Defeated in the North, the leaders of the United Irishmen directed all their exertions to the propagation of their principles throughout Connaught and Munster. In Connaught, they made but little progress, for the vigorous measures of Lord Carhampton and of the magistrates of that province were not forgotten. But in Munster their success was great, and in a few months the same outrages and enormities which had disgraced the Northern province were common in Munster. And it was observed "that in addition to the acts of violence usually resorted to by the party for the furtherance of their purpose, the ancient practice of burning the corn and houghing the cattle of those against whom their resentment was directed, was revived and very generally practised in the counties of Waterford and Cork".[2]

Though Grattan asserted that France had made "gigantic encroachments on the empire," and that the King of England was at the feet of France,[3] Great Britain was still mistress of the seas. She had destroyed the commerce of France, Spain and Holland, annexed to her empire the Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon, and was in possession of the whole trade with the East. Three powers, France, Spain and Holland, were combined for the purpose of disputing her maritime supremacy, but she defeated all their efforts. During the summer of this year, the French made extensive preparations for the invasion of Ireland, and the Dutch fleet in the Texel was ready to join in the project. Earlier in the year, a powerful Spanish fleet, numbering twenty-seven sail of the line and ten frigates, had been ordered to unite with the French and Dutch. On the 14th of February, Sir John Jervis, with fifteen ships of the line, attacked the Spanish fleet off St. Vincent's, defeated it with the loss of four battleships and 3,000 prisoners, and drove the rest into Cadiz. But about a month later, the greatest danger which ever threatened Great Britain made its appearance. A mutiny broke out in the Channel fleet, stationed at Spithead. An oath, to support the cause in which they were engaged, was administered to every man in the fleet of sixteen men-of-war. But wise concessions put an end to this mutiny, and on the 17th of May the fleet put to sea.

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collection*, Preface.

[2] Report of the secret committee of the Commons, 1798.

[3] In his *Address to his Fellow-Citizens of Dublin*, 1797.

A few days later a more formidable mutiny broke out among the ships at the Nore. Notwithstanding the full extension to them of all the benefits which had been accepted with gratitude by the fleet at Spithead, the mutiny spread, and the mutineers committed several acts of violence against merchant vessels. Pitt at once brought in bills to provide a more effectual punishment for those who should excite mutiny in the navy, and to prevent all communication with the ships while they continued in a state of mutiny. The ships gradually returned to their duty, and on the 30th of June discipline was restored.

It was afterwards discovered that this latter mutiny was largely owing to the intrigues and devices of the United Irishmen. There were then great numbers of Irishmen in the navy, many of whom were disaffected. The oaths which had been administered to the crews of the ships at the Nore show that the United Irishmen had been busy in the fleet. One of these oaths was "to be United Irishmen equal to their brethren in Ireland, and to have nothing to do with the King or his Government". Another was, "I swear to be true to the free and United Irish, who are now fighting our cause against tyrants and oppressors, and to defend their rights to the last drop of my blood, and to keep all secrets; and I do agree to carry the ship into Brest the next time the ship looks out a-head at sea, and to kill every officer and man that shall hinder us, except the master". The mutineers acted in the expectation of assistance from France, and with the express intention of co-operating for the expulsion of the Protestants from Ireland, and the establishment of a Roman Catholic Government. It was also a part of their plan to murder their officers, seize the ships and carry them to France or Ireland.[1]

During all this critical time the French and Dutch fleets took no advantage of the mutiny. The French were not ready, and the Dutch were delayed by some negotiations with the French Directory. When the Dutch fleet was about to sail for Ireland, the wind became unfavourable and remained so for a considerable period, insomuch that it was necessary to land the troops, the provisions having been exhausted. Finally, the Dutch fleet, contrary to the opinion of its admiral, as is generally believed, was, at the instance of the French Government, obliged to put to sea,[2] which led to the brilliant and decisive victory of Camperdown, on the 11th of October, 1797. The Dutch fought well, but they lost nine out of sixteen men-of-war, and their admiral was taken prisoner.[3]

The United Irishmen did not fail to borrow the assistance of a most wicked and licentious press. The *Northern Star* had been established immediately after the foundation of their first society, for the purpose of advocating and spreading their principles. This paper contributed largely to the extension of treason in the North. For six years it misrepresented every act of Government, encouraged disaffection, and from disaffection led the way to treason. On the 15th of May, four men of the Monaghan regiment of militia, then stationed in Belfast, were tried for exciting a mutiny in the regiment, and sentenced to be shot.[1] The unfortunate men, when kneeling on their coffins, declared most solemnly that they had been seduced from their allegiance principally by reading the treasonable publications in the *Northern Star*, and earnestly exhorted their fellow soldiers never to read that flagitious paper. These dying words, and the view of the bodies of their unhappy comrades, made such an impression upon the men that, on their return to barracks, they drew up a declaration of their sincere repentance and a promise of their future loyalty, in which they ascribed the seduction of their unfortunate comrades and of many of themselves to the treasonable artifices of the inhabitants of Belfast. This declaration was taken to the two papers printed in the town. One, the *News Letter*, published it, but the *Northern Star* rejected it with expressions of contempt, though the men offered to pay for its insertion. This conduct so incensed the soldiers that, on the following night, some of them stole from their quarters, broke into the printing house, and demolished the press and types.[2] This fact, like every other in Irish history, has been misrepresented, and the destruction of the *Northern Star* has been attributed to the Government.

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[1] Report of the secret committee of the British Commons, *Parliamentary History*, xxxiv., p. 579.

[2] Report of the secret committee of the Irish Commons, 1798.

[3] *Tone's Life*, ii., p. 452.

In the summer of this year, 1797, an infamous paper called the *Union Star* was privately printed and circulated.

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[1] *Belfast Historical Collections*, p. 472.

[2] Duigenan's *Answer to Grattan.* See also Lord Clare's speech on Lord Moira's motion, 19th February, 1798.

It was printed only on one side, to fit it for being pasted on walls. It inculcated insurrection and assassination in direct terms, and contained a description of the persons by name who were held out as objects of assassination on account of their loyalty or the performance of their duty. Each number commenced with the following words: "As the *Union Star* is an official paper, the managers promise the public that no characters shall be hazarded, but such as are denounced by authority, as being the partners and creatures of Pitt, and his sanguinary journeyman, Luttrell. The *Star* offers to public justice the following detestable traitors as spies and perjured informers. Perhaps some arm more lucky than the rest may reach his heart, and free the world from bondage". Then followed a list of the proscribed.[1]

In September of this year, the leaders of the United Irishmen established another paper in Dublin called the *Press*. Its proprietors were Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Arthur O'Connor. In this paper "every species of misrepresentation and sophistry was made use of to vilify the Government, to extend the Union, to shake the connection with Great Britain, to induce the people to look to French assistance, to exaggerate the force and numbers of the disaffected, and systematically to degrade the administration of justice in all its departments".[2] In December of this year, its printer and nominal proprietor was convicted of a seditious libel published in one of its numbers, and was sentenced to stand in the pillory for an hour and to be imprisoned for two years.[3] At last the Irish Government plucked up courage, and on the 6th of March, 1798, this paper was suppressed.

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[1] Report of the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798. Many extracts from the *Union Star* are given in the twenty-seventh Appendix to this Report.

[2] Report of the secret committee of the Commons, 1798.

[3] *State Trials*, xxvi., pp. 901-1018.

On the 11th of July, 1797, the Parliament was dissolved and a new one summoned. Grattan seized the opportunity of publishing an address to his fellow citizens of Dublin.[1] This was a pamphlet of twenty-nine pages, closely printed, and was industriously circulated both in England and Ireland.[2]

No such farrago of treasonable promptings, rancorous libels against the Governments of both countries, falsehood, mendacious misrepresentations of history, and bombastic metaphors was ever written by a sane man or escaped the due punishment of law. In this address Grattan abandoned all decency, and exhibited what effects the mad rage of disappointment, measureless vanity, and profound ignorance of the constitution and laws of Ireland could produce.

A few quotations will show us the nature of this criminal production. In the beginning of it, he asserted that the Minister of the Crown had endeavoured to make the King in Parliament everything, and to work the people completely out of the House of Commons, and that "a Minister guilty of such a crime was as much a traitor to the Constitution as the People would be to the King, if they should advance in arms, and place their leader on the throne—more guilty in equity and justice—because in them it would be only rebellion against their creature, the King, but in the other it would be rebellion against his creator, the People". In this confused sentence, *other* does not mean the Minister but the King, whom he describes as created by the people. Very strange arguments might be deduced from this nonsense: for example, as the creator cannot commit rebellion against his creature, no act done by the people against the King could amount to rebellion; and as a creature can have no rights against his creator, the people might annihilate the King at their pleasure. He justified the nightly murders, burnings and robberies of the United Irishmen and Defenders by ascribing them to political motives; "Whatever be the crime of the present spirit, it is not the crime of theft—if so, it were easily put down; no, it is a political not a predatory spirit; it is the spirit of political reformation carried to different degrees; to liberty in most instances—to ambition in others—and to power in others; and even in these cases where charged to be carried to confiscation,[1] it is evident from the charge itself, that confiscation looks to political vengeance not private plunder". And again, "So here there may be conspiracy; there may be republicanism; there may be a spirit of plunder mixing in the public cause—but it is a public cause; and let no man persuade you that it is not the cause of liberty on one side and tyranny on the other". He described Great Britain as having fallen very low: "It is now sixty years since the adoption of the project to supply in corruption what the chief magistrate lost in prerogative; —the loss of thirteen provinces; of £120,000,000 to lose these provinces; the loss of our status in Europe; the loss of £130,000,000 to lose that status—to place the Crown of England as low in Europe as in America, and to put France at the head of Europe, instead of Great Britain, while her people crouch under a load of debt and taxes without an empire to console or a Constitution to cover them—has been the working of that project. It has worked so well as to have worked the people out of their liberty, and his Majesty out of his empire; to leave him as little authority in Europe as his people in Parliament; and to put the King at the feet of France, as the people are put at the feet of the King: public credit has also fallen a victim to this its success, its last great conquest after liberty and empire." Having pointed out the weakness of Great Britain and the superiority of the French, who had lately attempted an invasion of his country, he warned the Irish loyalists against supporting Great Britain in case of a rebellion. "We saw in the American revolution, that a people determined to be free cannot be enslaved; that British government was not equal to the task, even in plenitude of empire, supported by the different governments of the provinces, and by the sad apostacy of the hapless loyalist; that loyalist is a lesson to the rich and great to stand by their country in all situations—and that in a contest with a remote court, the first post of safety is to stand by the country, and the second post of safety is to stand by the country, and the third post of safety is to stand by the country". He declared that the Irish Parliament, or as he called it, a borough Parliament, had been the cause of all the evils which had affected the country since the reign of James I., and that it had never behaved well except in the short interval, 1779-1782, and then only "because Parliament was at those moments in contact with the people". He accused the Government of making the sad experiment "to blood the magistracy with the poor man's liberty, and employ the rich like a pack of bloodhounds to hunt down the poor," and declared that the Minister acted on the principle of bribing the rich and oppressing the poor. "No! no! no! The half-million, said the Minister; that is my principle of attraction. Among the rich I send my half-million, and I despatch my coercion among the people! His devil went forth. He destroyed liberty and property; he consumed the press; he burned houses and villages; he murdered and he failed". Throughout this revolutionary rant, we find much figurative nonsense, as "a naked man oppressed by the State is an armed post": the principle of self-legislation[1] "baptised with royalty the House of Hanover, when the people stood sponsors for their allegiance to the liberty of the subject". "Kings are but satellites, and your freedom is the luminary that has called them to the skies". Reform is "a principle of attraction, about which the King and people would spin on quietly and insensibly in regular movements, and in a system common to them both".

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[1] *The Right Honourable Henry Grattan's Address to his Fellow Citizens of Dublin.* Dublin, 1797.

[2] Mr. Lecky says "Grattan refused to stand" for the new Parliament (vii., 416). Grattan was not asked by any constituency to stand, and, therefore, did not refuse. He did not seek to re-enter Parliament, because he knew that with the Protestants of Ireland he was most unpopular, and that his influence in the Commons was gone for ever.

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[1] He calls the robberies of the United Irishmen and Defenders "confiscation".

We cannot read this wicked and shameful trash without asking in what respect did Grattan differ from a United Irishman. While in Parliament he had flattered those traitors, and compared them to a persecuted people conducted through the wilderness by Providence, and now he palliated their crimes by attributing them to political motives.[2] He had opposed, and in this address he made a grievance of, every measure intended for their repression. He had given up his own plan of Reform, and adopted another which had been sanctioned by their approval.[3] Like them, he had attempted to establish a revolutionary democracy under the mask of a Reform, which would have granted the elective franchise to the beggary of the kingdom. Like them also he hated England and magnified the resources and successes of an enemy, whose object was known to be the invasion of Ireland and the conquest of Great Britain. By his perpetual reference to the American War, and the loss of thirteen provinces, he pointed out the impotence of Great Britain to subdue rebellion, and encouraged resistance to the Government. His hatred to monarchy appears very plainly in his plan of Reform, which would have totally excluded the influence of the Crown, and also in this address. Throughout the latter, all the Kings before the present were represented as oppressors, and the reigning sovereign was spoken of in extremely indecent terms. He was described as the creature of the people and an absentee; he was at the feet of France and his Cabinet was a "humiliated and tame tyrant". His court was a "foreign" and "remote" court; and the influence of his Cabinet, that is, the influence which the Constitution gives the King in Parliament, was a "foreign yoke". Repeating his old falsehood that the only opposition to Roman Catholic emancipation came from the King, Grattan declared "that the capacities of three-fourths of the people should not be made a personal compliment to his Majesty".

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[1] Yet a very short time before the publication of this address, Grattan had argued for giving up self-legislation, and allowing appeals from the Parliament of Ireland to the British House of Commons. He forgot that he had received £50,000 for asserting the independence of the Irish legislature.

[2] "Grattan," says Mr. Lecky, "had, at no period of his life, any sympathy with those politicians who look with indifference on outrage and crime, or imagine that ordinary remedies are sufficient to meet extraordinary diseases" (vol. vii., p. 197).

[3] "He [Neilson] also stated that the plan of Reform prepared by you (called Mr. Ponsonby's) would have satisfied the North at the time. That the Opposition then had a right to think they had the support of the people, as several copies of it were sent to the different leaders and influential persons in Leinster and Ulster, in order to receive their alterations, for

In the following year, when it became known that Grattan had received visits from United Irishmen immediately before the rebellion broke out, and that one of them had pressed him to join their conspiracy—the concealment of which fact amounted to misprision of treason,[1]

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the purpose of incorporating them into a general plan, which plan, so altered, they returned to you" (Dowdall to Grattan, *Life*, iv., p. 409).

[1] By the Insurrection Act, the concealment of a request to take an illegal oath was felony without benefit of clergy.

Grattan's name was struck off the list of Privy Councillors; he was disfranchised by the corporation of Dublin, by the guild of merchants, and the corporation of Derry; and his picture was taken down from the walls of the Dublin University.

Among the citizens of Dublin whom Grattan had addressed there happened to be a very able and learned man, well versed in the laws and history of his country. Dr. Duigenan published an Answer to Grattan's Address.[1] In this, he examined every statement made in the address, and held up the whole as a perfect example of the art of political lying. This answer is full of accurate information, and well deserves the attention of all those who attempt to write the history of Ireland without a knowledge of her Constitution and of the laws which secured the connection of the two countries. A good judge of literary merit has expressed a high opinion of Dr. Duigenan's book. George Canning thus spoke of it in the British House of Commons: "The gentleman to whom I refer is Dr. Duigenan. This gentleman's book in answer to Mr. Grattan contains, in my mind, the most complete statement of the causes and nature of the present distractions in Ireland. It is not only a very ingenious but a very learned work, if that were any further recommendation to it. It more completely demolishes his antagonist than any controversial work that I remember ever to have read." [2]

Mr. Lecky tells us that the administration of Lord Camden was *disastrous*. This extraordinary judgment is directly contrary to the opinion of the Lords and Commons of Ireland. In reality, it was a very brilliant and successful administration. A secret conspiracy, operating by invisible means, against which the slow formalities of municipal law were powerless, and which had secured itself by an oath, the violation of which was certain death, had taken possession of the province of Ulster. The leaders of this conspiracy, by their unrelenting cruelty, had turned what had been the most peaceful part of Ireland into a scene of domestic treachery, barbarous murders, midnight attacks on houses and cowardly assassinations. They had collected an army of a hundred thousand men, sworn and united to overturn the existing Constitution, and to join the French when they should invade the country. They had established a reign of terror; and magistrates, jurors and witnesses were murdered if they dared to do their duty. Public justice was insulted and disabled, the King's troops were fired on, and the civil power had lost all authority. Such was the condition of Ulster when Lord Camden issued an order to disarm the "counties of Down, Antrim, Tyrone, Derry and Donegal.[1] It is absurd to say, as Mr. Lecky does, that this order was illegal. No Government could look on quietly while its subjects were murdered and an army collected to destroy itself and all who supported it. The Irish Government was bound to use every means, within or beyond the law, that was necessary to put an end to the anarchy which reigned in Ulster. This was the view of the Irish Commons. On the 20th of March, 1797, they presented an address to Lord Camden, expressing their gratitude for the exertions he had made to restore tranquillity in the North. "We feel with horror and indignation the dangerous and daring outrages committed in many parts of the province of Ulster, evidently perpetrated with a view to supersede the law and prevent the administration of justice by an organised system of murder and robbery: and which have lately increased to so alarming a degree in some parts of that province as to bid defiance to the exertions of the civil power, and to endanger the lives and properties of his Majesty's subjects. . . ." They then describe more fully the frightful state of Ulster, and proceed "we are impressed with the warmest feelings of gratitude for the care and the vigilant attention to the interests of the kingdom which has constantly marked your Excellency's administration, and we cannot too highly applaud the vigour and firmness of your conduct at the present critical conjuncture."[1]

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[1] *An Answer to the Address of the Right Honourable Henry Grattan, ex-representative of the City of Dublin in Parliament, to his fellow-citizens of Dublin.* Dublin, 1798.

[2] *Parliamentary History*, xxxiv., p. 229.

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[1] See a description of the state of Ulster given by the Irish House of Commons in their address to Lord Camden (*Commons' Journals*, xvii., part i., p. 96).

A few days after the publication of the reports from the secret committees of the Lords and Commons, both Houses of Parliament presented a joint address to Lord Camden, urging him to exercise "the full energy of all the powers as well military as civil" entrusted to him to suppress treason and rebellion.[2]

The city of Londonderry was situated in the midst of the most disturbed parts of Ulster, and its magistrates had the fullest opportunity of knowing the necessity, the execution, and the happy consequences of Lord Camden's measures. On the 7th of December, 1797, the corporation of this city presented an address to Lord Camden, expressing their "grateful sense of the vigilance and vigour which had distinguished and given efficacy" to his Government. "When those execrable banditti, who call themselves United Irishmen, had not only the baseness to coalesce with our foreign foes in meditating the overthrow of that Constitution which had given freedom and prosperity to our country, but had also the audacity to denounce horrid vengeance against all who should oppose them; when they even proceeded to realise those menaces by every species of barbarous outrage; when the arms of such as were deemed loyal were extorted from them by midnight violence; when committees of assassination were formed, and their suggestions deplorably executed; when terror imposed silence upon witnesses, and made even the honest juror shrink from his duty, it was obvious in such circumstances that the ordinary exercise of law could not but prove ineffectual, and the credit and commerce of the country, the security of property and life, the existence of the community, as well as the unanimous voice of the well-disposed inhabitants of Ireland, indispensably called for an exertion of the legislative and executive authority more adequate to the melancholy exigence."

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[1] *Commons' Journals*, xvii, part i., p. 96.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 157.

"The summary powers created by recent legislation," it proceeds, "have been executed with wisdom and mercy, nor have they, we are confident, been extended to any district where the circumstances of the country did not loudly demand their exercise; while, therefore, none but disappointed traitors complain, you possess the approbation of every unprejudiced Irishman. We should be wanting to ourselves in spirit, honour and truth, if we did not bear testimony to the facts which we have witnessed. We are at this time peculiarly called on to do so, in consequence of a gross misstatement made by a noble personage[1] in another kingdom, from whom, considering his rank and character, better information and less party prejudice might fairly have been expected ; we willingly attribute to total ignorance of existing circumstances what it would be painful to impute to any dishonourable view ; but to the statements made by him relative to the measures adopted by the Government of the kingdom, and especially to that audacious assertion, 'that the proceedings in question were not merely particular acts of cruelty, but that those acts of cruelty formed a part of the system acted upon,' we give the most direct and unequivocal contradiction ; nay, we are bold to affirm, and we defy the ingenuity of malice to disprove, that the general conduct both of the magistrates and the military commanders has been cautious and discriminative ; that summary measures have been rarely and reluctantly put in practice ; that the strictest attention has been exerted not to confound the seduced with the seducers or the ignorant with the obdurate ; and that, since the civil power has received these additional aids, this country has manifested the happiest alteration both in point of tranquillity and manufacturing industry, insomuch that the state of our commerce is, at this moment, remarkably vigorous and flourishing."[1]

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[1] Lord Moira. Mr. Lecky, referring to the speech of this mischievous nobleman, says: "In November, Lord Moira, who spoke with the authority of a great Ulster landlord, brought the proceedings [of Government] in Ulster before the English House of Lords". What did Mr. Lecky mean by the words, "the authority of a great Ulster landlord"? Did he not know that Lord Moira was an absentee, who resided at his seat in Leicestershire, and only occasionally visited his Irish estates? Why did Mr. Lecky not mention the addresses of Parliament to Lord Camden, and the above contradiction, which was given by magistrates on the spot, to the statements of Lord Moira?

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[1] Seward, *Collectanea Hibernica*, iii., p. 210.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE EVE OF THE REBELLION.

THE last Irish Parliament met on the 9th of January, 1798.

In his speech from the throne, the Lord-Lieutenant told the Houses, that in consequence of their addresses to him in the previous May, he had taken vigorous steps to repress disaffection and to restore tranquillity in the North. The effects of these measures were to be seen in the return of subordination and industry in Ulster; but the leaders of the disaffected had succeeded in raising disturbances in some parts of the Midland and Southern districts. Emissaries had been employed, and publications had been circulated by them to revive religious animosities, and to open prospects of plunder, "by which means the lower classes had been excited to commit acts of the most horrid outrage and barbarity."[1]

Addresses were presented by the Commons to the King and the Viceroy. The address to the Viceroy pointed to the tranquillity which had attended the late elections as "an incontrovertible proof that the wisdom and firmness, displayed in the measures of the late Parliament, had been felt and approved by the nation at large." They congratulated the Viceroy on the restoration of tranquillity in the North, and assured him of their zealous concurrence in such measures as should be necessary to repress disaffection and outrage in the other parts of the kingdom. "We agree," they continued, "with the opinion expressed by your Excellency, that unremitting exertions continue to be necessary, when all means are employed to excite the people to rebellion and revolt, when a systematic plan of assassination is adopted and encouraged, and when the most audacious attempts are made to impede and prevent the administration of justice."[1] No man was safe, no house secure from attack. Magistrates were almost daily murdered by command of a secret tribunal which had condemned them.

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[1] *Commons' Journals*, xvii. Part I., p. 194.

The language of the Viceroy and the House of Commons was not a whit too strong. The United Irishmen had turned the Midlands and the South, as they had done before in Ulster, into a hell upon earth. No life was safe for twenty-four hours. An invisible power of darkness was dealing destruction around, and peace and security were unknown. Every gentleman had a guard of four or five soldiers in his house,[2] and even this precaution was not to be depended on, for many of the servants were sworn members of the general conspiracy. Mr. Conolly, who lived in a splendid mansion, about twelve miles from Dublin, discovered a conspiracy within the walls of his own house for the murder of himself and his wife, and the delivery of the house to a gang of United Irishmen. He was obliged to fortify his house, and maintain in it a regular garrison of soldiers.[3] But the condition of the poor and loyal Protestants was indeed lamentable; for no loyal man could sit secure at his own fireside; the first notice he received of an attack on his house was usually a volley of musketry through his windows. If this failed to drive him out of his house, it was set on fire, in order to force him out for assassination.[4]

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[1] *Commons' Journals.* xvii. Part I., pp. 198-9.

[2] Seward's *Collectanea Hibernica*, iii., p. 217.

[3] Lord Clare's speech, 19th February, 1798.

[4] *Ib.*

Reform and emancipation had been the watch-words of the conspiracy in the North, but neither possessed the slightest interest for the Leinster or Munster peasants. Reform conveyed no idea to their minds, and for emancipation they did not care a feather.[1] Other inducements were therefore held out to them, and they were taught to expect the abolition of rent and tithes, and a portion of the forfeited lands. The emissaries of the United Irishmen also dexterously turned to their own advantage the religious prejudices and dissensions which existed in the country. They industriously represented to the Roman Catholics, who formed the vast majority in Leinster and Munster, that the United System was necessary to their defence, as their Protestant fellow-subjects had entered into a solemn league to exterminate them, having sworn to wade up to their knees in Popish blood.[2] These wicked arts were successful, and the United Irishmen made rapid progress in Leinster and Munster. The same system of outrage, which the party had adopted in the North for establishing their own authority and compelling the people to look to them for protection, soon appeared throughout the Midland and Southern counties. Innumerable crimes of every kind were committed. We are told by the highest authority that "in the months of February and March (1798) many parts of the provinces of Leinster and Munster were actually in the possession of a murderous banditti. If they did not appear in arms by day, it only rendered their rebellion more difficult to be met and crushed by the King's troops and yeomanry. Not a night passed without numerous murders. Several districts in the provinces of Leinster and Munster had been proclaimed under the powers given to the Lord-Lieutenant and Council by the Act for preventing insurrections, but these measures proved ineffectual; very many of the loyal inhabitants of the counties of Cork, Limerick, Tipperary, Kilkenny, Carlow, King's County, Queen's County, Kildare and Wicklow, were, in the course of one month, stript of their arms, and in many places obliged to fly for shelter into the garrison towns. And as one instance, among many, of the daring lengths to which the conspirators at this time had proceeded, your committee think it necessary to state that in open day, 800 insurgents, principally mounted, invested the town of Cahir, in the county of Tipperary, held possession of it until they had made a regular search through every house, and carried off in triumph all the arms and ammunition they could find."[1]

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[1] "I believe the mass of the people do not care a feather for Catholic emancipation, neither did they care for Parliamentary reform, till it was explained to them, as leading to other objects which they looked to, principally the abolition of tythes" (Evidence of Thomas A. Emmet, 11th August, 1798, before the committee of the House of Lords).

[2] Report of the Lords' secret committee, 1769.

Though thousands of arms of all kinds had been seized or surrendered throughout Ulster during the year 1797, the United System was not dead in that province. The Presbyterians, shocked by the enormities committed in Leinster and Munster, were daily deserting the conspiracy, and enlisting in the yeomanry. But the leaders kept alive some of the higher committees, and endeavoured to prevent the spread of the despondency caused by the disarming and the presence of the military. The means adopted to raise the drooping spirits of their followers were reports that the French were certainly coming, or that large numbers of the King's troops were disaffected and ready to join them; as an inspection of the proceedings of some of the Northern committees about the time will show.

14th November, 1797.—At a provincial meeting in Armagh of the delegates of Tyrone, Donegal, Armagh,

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[1] Report from the secret committee of the Commons, 1798.

Monaghan, Down and Antrim, it was stated that there were 4,000 military in the county Antrim, and that of these, 700 were "friends of the people"; in Down, 1,100, of whom 1,000 were friends; in Tyrone, 2,700, of whom 1,000 were friends; in Armagh, 4,200, of whom 200 were friends; in Donegal, 2,000 of whom 700 were friends. Monaghan sent no return. The delegates were asked if they thought their counties could disarm the military in them. All said they could, except Armagh. The secretary said, there were now four executive committees, in Cork, Galway, Dublin and Ulster; two members from each had met the week before; and the reports from Leinster and Munster were very good. He assured them that a delegate had just arrived from France. The expedition from the Texel had been put off, owing to the defeat of the Batavian fleet, but the Directory was now preparing "a more formidable expedition for us which we might depend upon".[1]

14th December, 1797.—At a provincial meeting of the delegates of six counties,[2] orders were given to every county delegate to procure an exact account of the numbers of the military, regulars, militia and yeomanry, and the quarters in which they lay, and also how many of them could be reckoned on as friends. These returns were required, the former having been very defective. "It is necessary that this should be completely remedied, and the respective stations and quarters of the troops known to the executive, to enable them to form the proper plan for co-operation with the French on landing."[3]

14th January, 1798.—At a provincial meeting in Armagh, where five counties were represented,[1] it was stated that there had been a meeting of the National Committee, and it was found that, "notwithstanding all the depredations committed by the military," the upper provinces were tolerably organised. It was also stated that France had intended to invade Ireland only, but that the Directory had changed their minds, and would invade the three kingdoms at once; "from the magnitude of such a great business, we need not expect them as soon as we did".[2]

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[1] Appendix xiv. Report from the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

[2] Monaghan, Donegal, Armagh, Tyrone, Antrim and Down.

[3] Appendix xiv., report from the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

1st February, 1798.—At a provincial meeting in Shane's Castle,[3] a delegate arrived from Dublin, and reported that the National Committee had met the same week, and that the upper provinces were ready to act in a moment. Two regiments in one province "had offered to deliver it". Three delegates had arrived from France, and the expedition was in a state of greater forwardness than was expected. Three delegates had also arrived from the United Britons; and England, Scotland and Ireland were henceforth to be considered as one people acting for a common cause. There were legislators chosen from the three kingdoms to act as an executive for the whole. He then produced an address from the United Britons to the United Irishmen, and said "he was certain we could now obtain liberty although the French never should come here". He told the delegates to have their men in readiness, "as the hour of acting could not be far distant".[4]

27th February, 1798. At a provincial meeting in Armagh,[5] a deputy from Dublin reported that a delegate had returned from France with the information that the French were making every exertion to hasten the expedition, and that the delegate had returned to exhort "us to put ourselves" into a state of organisation, as the Directory had positively assured our delegates that the expedition would set out for Ireland in the latter end of April or beginning of May. The deputy then presented instructions how the counties were to act, and made every member take a copy. These instructions directed the colonels in each county to make lists of such persons as were to be chosen adjutants-general, and also contained full information as to the duty of these officers when chosen.[1]

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[1] Tyrone, Armagh, Antrim, Down and Donegal.

[2] Appendix xiv., Report from the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

[3] Number of counties not mentioned. [4] *Ib.* [5] *Ib.*

The condition of Ireland at this time almost passes belief. The country was seething in rebellion. Its Government did not know the moment a French invasion might land. An army of domestic traitors, 270,000[2] strong, every member of which looked forward to a general massacre and confiscation, was prepared to join the invaders. In the North the United Irishmen were endeavouring to recruit their strength. In the Midlands and in the South no man was safe from the organised system of assassination which prevailed, while, at the same time, every attempt was made to prevent the administration of justice by the murder of magistrates, jurors and witnesses.[3] It was to such a country that a hare-brained member of the English Opposition was now come, to increase the difficulties of the brave men who were struggling against the greatest and most wide-spread conspiracy known to history.

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[1] Appendix xiv., etc.

[2] In their address to Irishmen, dated the 17th of March, 1798, the United Irishmen described themselves as "four hundred thousand fighting men, the physical strength of Ireland" (Appendix xxv., Report from the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798).

[3] "The daily execution of magistrates is shocking; if the insurgents can proceed in the administration of punishment with impunity, the timid and neutral of all descriptions will be on their side speedily" (Lord Westmoreland to Mr. Beresford, 15th March, 1798, *Beresford Correspondence*, iii., p. 153).

Lord Moira had already twice called the attention of the British House of Lords to the state of Ireland—a subject wholly and exclusively within the cognisance of the legislature of Ireland. On the 21st of March, 1797, he moved an address to the King, imploring his paternal intervention to remedy the discontents which prevailed in Ireland.[1] This motion could not have been adopted without infringing on the legislative independence of Ireland, and breaking the solemn contract which had been made between the two countries in 1782. We may form an idea of the intellect and knowledge of Ireland, which Lord Moira possessed by some of his statements on this occasion. "He was convinced that the general sentiment of Ireland was that of cordial attachment to this country, and that it was the determination of the majority to stand or fall with this country." . . . "He was confident, however, that the adoption of measures calculated to impress the people with confidence in the Government would quickly call forth that fond affection of the inhabitants of Ireland to this country, which circumstances might cloud, but could not extinguish." The motion was rejected by 91 to 21.

On the 22nd of November, he again brought the subject before the British House of Lords.[2] On this occasion he told the House that he had seen in Ireland the most absurd and disgusting tyranny that any nation had ever groaned under. He had seen in that country a marked distinction made between the English and the Irish. He had seen troops sent thither full of this prejudice, that every inhabitant of that kingdom was a rebel to the British Government. He had seen the most grievous oppression exercised in a part of the country "as quiet and as free from disturbance as the city of London".[1] The curfew existed in Ireland, and persons were obliged to put out their lights at a certain hour. He had known an instance of a master of a house entreating a party of soldiers to allow him to have a candle alight, for his child was in convulsions, and the mother was hanging over the infant to administer the necessary assistance. The Inquisition did not differ from the system pursued in Ireland. Men had been picketed till they fainted, and again picketed; men had even been half hanged to make them confess the crimes they had been charged with. These outrages had been committed in open day; yet they were not made known, because the printers of newspapers feared the vengeance of Government. A party of troops in open daylight had destroyed the *Northern Star*. If a man in Ireland declined to give up his arms, the regular punishment of his contumacy was that a party of military might go and burn his house and destroy his property. He had seen a conquered country held by a military force, but never had he seen in any country such a tone of insult as had been adopted by Great Britain to Ireland. He then sat down, without making a motion on the subject of his speech.

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[1] *Parliamentary History*, xxiii., p. 127.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 1,058.

It is hard to say whether falsehoods or exaggerations predominate in this speech. If he had seen, as he said, oppressive acts committed in Ireland, why did he, a peer of that country, not communicate them to the Lord-Lieutenant or Commander-in-Chief, instead of keeping them in his own breast? He afterwards[1] withdrew every charge against the military, and with this withdrawal, his statement that they burned the houses of those who refused to give up their arms, fell to the ground. On the same occasion he denied that he had ever said that troops had been sent full of prejudice against the Irish people: "What I said was that the foreign troops, which were sent to Ireland, went thither under an unfortunate prejudice, which care had been taken to instil into them, that every man they met was a rebel".[2] He admitted also on the same occasion that the piteous case of the mother hanging over her sick child, and the father entreating the patrol to allow him to keep a light, was imaginary, and introduced for effect. "In describing the severity of so arbitrary a measure, I took the liberty to suppose a case in which the enforcement of it would be attended with great hardship; the case was that of a parent watching at night over her dying child, and obliged in such circumstances to put out her light by the order of a military patrol."[3] His statement that the newspapers did not dare, from fear of the Government, to mention the outrages was too absurd, at a time when the *Press* was disseminating treason three times a week. His charge against the Irish Government, that they had sent troops in broad daylight to destroy the *Northern Star*, was a positive falsehood. The half-hanging and picketing of *men* till they fainted resolved themselves into the case of *one* man. Information had been given that a blacksmith had made a large quantity of pikes. To a party which had been sent to search his house he denied all knowledge of any pikes. The soldiers, to terrify him into a confession, threw a rope round his neck and threatened to hang him, but nothing more was done. He was then taken to Downpatrick, and there, he was put upon a picket by a colonel of Fencibles. He at once gave information, and next day more than one hundred pikes were discovered in consequence of his information.[1] Lord Moira did not tell the assembled peers that it was his duty, before charging the Irish Government with acts of oppression, to have made himself acquainted with the long and bloody catalogue of murders and burnings committed by the United Irishmen, and then to have compared the means of repression with those crimes. Nor did he mention the truth, that every act done by the Irish Government had been done under the authority of Irish statutes, or of the addresses of both Houses of the Irish Parliament. He also forgot to mention that he was merely retailing to the House stories which had been collected for him by a United Irishman, William Sampson, acting in concert with Whitley Stokes, an ex-United Irishman.[2]

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[1] Here Lord Moira refers to his own town of Ballynahinch, in the county of Down. Ballynahinch was a centre of disturbance hardly inferior to Belfast. The meetings of the committee for county Down were often held in this town. (Fourteenth Appendix to Report of the Commons' Secret Committee). The county of Down had been dreadfully disturbed in 1796 and 1797. In the debate which took place in the Irish House of Lords on the 19th of February, 1798, Lord Glentworth read out a long list of murders which had been committed in that county during those years.

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[1] In his speech made in the Irish House of Lords on the 19th February, 1798.

[2] His reply on the same occasion.

[3] *Ib.*

This is the speech which Mr. Lecky introduces to his readers as having been delivered "with the authority of a great Ulster landlord," but he forgets to tell them that Lord Moira was an absentee, and only visited Ireland occasionally.[3] Just as, in the same page, he relates that a meeting was held in Dublin which passed resolutions against the outrages committed by soldiers, signed by Valentine Lawless, afterwards the first Lord Cloncurry, without adding that this Valentine Lawless, afterwards

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[1] Speech of Lord Clare, 19th February, 1798.

[2] Sampson was banished. A visitation of Trinity College, Dublin, was held on the 19th April, 1798, to inquire whether the disaffection imputed to the College really existed. Stokes was examined, and admitted that he had been a United Irishman in 1791, and that he had communicated to Sampson, as materials for Lord Moira, accounts of excesses committed by soldiers (Madden, *United Irishmen*, iii., p. 278).

[3] Lecky, vol. vii., p. 305.

Lord Cloncurry, was a United Irishman, and for some time a member of the Directory.[1]

If Lord Moira had known the estimation in which he himself was held by the United Irishmen, he would have abstained from censuring the measures of the Irish Government. At a county meeting held on the 4th of February, 1798, at Saintfield in the county Down, not very far from his own town of Ballynahinch, "Earl Moira's character was discussed at full length, to know whether he was a man that could be depended upon or not by the people. It was agreed that he was as great a tyrant as the Lord Lieutenant, and a deeper designing one".[2]

In his second speech in the British Parliament, Lord Moira had intimated that he might discuss the Government's conduct in the Irish House of Peers, of which he was a member.[3] No sooner was this known in Ireland than a number of the disaffected formed themselves into a society for supplying him with information.[4] But Lord Moira was too wise to make use of such information before men who were acquainted with the true condition of the country. When, on the 19th of February, 1798, he rose in the Irish House, he withdrew every charge against the army: "No, my Lords, never did I presume to charge the army with any act of oppression . . . it was against the Cabinet of England that my attack was wholly directed. I accused it of having made the army the instrument of a cruel and arbitrary system of vengeance and oppression towards this country". He did not mention any act of cruelty or oppression, though challenged to produce the list of outrages he had spoken of in the British House, because, as he said in his reply, he thought it was for the honour of his country to forget them—a strange reason in the mouth of a man who had trumpeted them abroad in another country. Nor did he say one word of the outrages committed by the United Irishmen, though news of four peculiarly barbarous murders had just come in.[1] He declared he was in favour of emancipation and reform. He then narrated that, on his arrival in Ireland, he had found that the district round his house and his own town of Ballynahinch had been reported as not merely disaffected but tainted with rebellion. He made every effort to discover the persons who were supposed to be instrumental in organising plots or conspiracies. "Finding that no such plots ever existed," he called a meeting of the inhabitants of Ballynahinch, and addressed them on the nature of republicanism and the blessings of a limited monarchy. When he spoke of the inestimable virtues of the King, "there was not a man who did not exhibit the most genuine and marked approbation". When he mentioned the magnanimity of the Prince of Wales and his attachment to Ireland, "there was not an eye which did not beam gratitude, or a heart which did not demonstrate its loyalty in the fervency of its acclamation". He concluded this curious harangue by moving an address to the Lord-Lieutenant, recommending the adoption of conciliatory measures.

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[1] Madden's *United Irishmen*, i., p. 283.

[2] Appendix xiv., Report from the secret committee of the Commons, 1798.

[3] *Parliamentary History*, xxxiii., 1,057.

[4] Speech of Lord Glentworth, 19th February, 1798. Lord Moira himself also mentions this fact in a letter to Lord Charlemont, dated 31st January, 1798. "I have received a notification that a committee has collected for me a great body of evidence respecting the shocking outrages that have been committed in different parts of Ireland" (*Charlemont's Correspondence*, ii., p. 314).

Lord Glentworth, formerly Sexton Pery, was the first to oppose the motion, which he considered so mischievous that it ought to be met at once. He related some of the "horrors committed by treason," and read out a long list of persons who had been murdered in the county of Down during the years 1796 and 1797.

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[1] The murders of Colonel Uniacke, Mansergh St. George, Esq., and of two troopers in the 9th Dragoons. See Lord Glentworth's speech in this debate.

Lord Cavan, one of the general officers serving in Ulster, said that Lord Moira's statement that the military obeyed orders as soldiers at which their feelings as men revolted, was a serious imputation on himself and the other general officers, who were the first to receive those orders. No general officer would obey inhuman or tyrannical orders. He concluded by putting a very pertinent question to Lord Moira. Why, when he became aware of the outrages he had mentioned, did he not apply to the nearest general officer to have them redressed, instead of carrying the recital of them, without explanation, to the British House of Peers?

The Chancellor[1] asked what security could be given that conciliation would be effectual. If conciliation was a spell to allay discontent, in no country had it found so fair a trial as in Ireland. For twenty years the policy of the British Cabinet towards Ireland had been a policy of conciliation. In 1779 there were restraints on the trade of Ireland; these restraints were removed at the request of the Irish Parliament. The voice of complaint was again soon heard. The Irish Opposition pointed out the grievances of the country, limiting them to the claim of Great Britain to bind Ireland by her law, and a Perpetual Mutiny Bill, and promising that if these were given up no further difficulty should ever arise between the two countries. They were given up, and these concessions were received with unbounded applause. Immediately after, it was discovered that it was not sufficient for Great Britain to repeal her law, declaring her right to bind Ireland, but that a renunciation of that right was indispensable. This became the universal cry, and the men, who three weeks before had been the popular idols, were not only exposed to insult but to personal danger. While this excitement raged, the Court of King's Bench in England decided upon a record, removed into that court before the Act of Repeal. It was the duty of Lord Mansfield to decide on a record which he found in his court, nor was there any way of avoiding it. This was a new grievance, and a clamour was raised against the British Cabinet. To allay this clamour the British Parliament passed the Act of Renunciation. Gratified in every wish, the Irish patriots discovered that their own Parliament, which had procured all these advantages, was itself a grievance. To remedy this they appointed a Military Convention, which met in Dublin, decked out in all the forms of a parliament, with its Speaker and Committees. A bill for the reform of the House of Commons was brought in, read, debated, read a second time, committed, reported, and ordered to be engrossed, read a third time, passed, and sent by two of their number, who were also members of the Commons, to be registered by Parliament. But Parliament vindicated its honour, and rejected a bill presented on the point of the bayonet.

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[1] Lord Clare.

After this firm conduct there was quiet for a year. But it was discovered that British manufactures, by their superior quality and cheapness, were preferred in the Irish markets. Instead of endeavouring to rival them in quality and cheapness, and without considering that the balance between the two countries was in favour of Ireland, it was resolved to commence a war of duties, though it was proved that there was not wool enough in Ireland to clothe one half of its inhabitants. To quiet these clamours, Great Britain offered a fair and liberal commercial treaty, by which she admitted the Irish to her markets, shared her immense capital with them, and opened her colonies to their trade, on condition that she should follow England in the laws she had made for the colonies and the trade in which they were to participate. This offer was represented as an attack on Irish independence, and the Irish Parliament, duped by the silliest deception, threw away an opportunity of consolidating the interests of the Empire.

In 1789, a most critical imperial question arose, in which the Irish Parliament acted with the most marked hostility towards the British Parliament. Upon the termination of this crisis, several of the oldest servants of the Crown refused to attend to their duty and were dismissed. These persons, combining with the old demagogues, formed themselves into a political club for the redress of grievances. They began with a manifesto, charging the British Government with a systematic design of destroying the liberty of Ireland, and proclaimed that they would defend with their lives and fortunes the Constitution as settled in 1688 and re-asserted in Ireland in 1782. The measures taken up by these men were repeatedly pressed upon Parliament with such coarse, intemperate invective that the minds of the people were so poisoned against the British name that they were ready to become the instruments of the United Irishmen, who have reduced Ireland to a state little short of the horrors of 1641. The United Irishmen, like the Whig club, began their career by a manifesto, not against any administration, but against the British name. They proposed a Union of all Irishmen for the purpose of arousing the indignation of the country against the British Connection and British power.

Wohm would Lord Moira conciliate? Was it the executive directory of Ireland, which held as regular a communication with France as Lord Camden did with the Cabinet? The United Irishmen could not be conciliated, for they thought themselves secure of French aid and of the lower orders, whom they had seduced by the hope of plunder and a distribution of land. They have excited the greater portion of those orders to a state of frenzy, and bound them by an oath, which to violate was certain death. By their unrelenting barbarity, they have spread universal horror and dismay through the country. Every witness who had dared to appear against them was written down in the book of death; magistrates had been murdered; even in courts of justice, jurymen had been threatened with the same fate. In the summer of 1797, a handbill had been sent through the North, cautioning jurors not to convict one of the brethren.

Had Lord Moira heard of a conspiracy entered into a few weeks before he spoke with some of the soldiery, to deliver the fort of Athlone and its magazine to the rebels, or in case of failure to blow it up? Or had he seen the order issued on the 1st of February, 1798, by the executive directory of the Union, which ran: "United Irishmen, your numbers are now so much increased that you may justly be called the people: but your organisation must increase with your numbers, for without it, how can your strength be brought to act? Consider what time this is; when France has, after overcoming all the powers of Europe, marched all her troops to her coasts for the invasion of Great Britain and Ireland, to meet men arrayed in the cause of liberty and anxious to receive them; Great Britain falling into bankruptcy and ruin; this is the moment for you to exert yourselves; unite and organise, and ere long you must be free."[1]

The House divided at half past two o'clock in the morning, and the motion was rejected by 45 to 10.

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[1] This debate gave rise to three pamphlets, which are to be found in the 745th volume of the Haliday Series in the Royal Irish Academy.

A remarkable confirmation of Lord Clare's statement, that the United Irishmen were not to be conciliated, took place almost at the moment he was speaking. The following resolution was passed on the evening of the same day by the Leinster and Ulster provincial committee: "Resolved, that we will pay no attention whatever to any attempt that may be made by either House of Parliament to divert the public mind from the grand object which we have in view, as nothing short of the complete emancipation of our country will satisfy us".[1]

A week after the appearance of Lord Moira in the House of Lords, another disagreeable incident occurred, which, if Lord Moira had not fully retracted his charges against the army, would have supported him in his folly. Sir Ralph Abercromby had come to Ireland as Commander-in-Chief early in December, 1797. He was at this time sixty-four years of age, of peculiar opinions and of inordinate self-esteem. He had not offered his services to his own Government during the American War because he sympathised with the Americans, that is, he sacrificed his public duty to his private opinions.[2] He had come over to Ireland strongly prejudiced against the Irish Government and the Irish legislature.[3] On his arrival, he found the troops necessarily scattered in small parties over the whole country for the protection of life and property, and acting without the presence of a magistrate, as they had been authorised to do by a Proclamation of the Lord-Lieutenant and Council, dated the 17th May, 1797.[4] To Abercromby, accustomed to large bodies moving in concert, the loose texture of the army was very distasteful, and that any one should interfere with his control and distribution of the army was infinitely disagreeable to him. His ignorance of the condition of the country was amazing. As early as the 28th of December, after a residence of about a fortnight, he wrote to the Duke of York, "the disturbances which have arisen in the South are exactly similar to those which have always prevailed in that part of the country".[1] In January, 1798, he visited the South, and, on the 23rd of the same month, he reported to the Lord-Lieutenant, that "as far as my information goes, the country through which I have passed is in a state of tranquillity".[2] In this letter he urged that the troops should be collected into large bodies, and the preservation of the peace and security of the country left to the yeomanry. To Abercromby's great annoyance, his advice was not taken, and in his irritation, and without consulting the Lord-Lieutenant or letting him know his intention, he published the following general order on the 26th of February, 1798.[3]

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[1] Examination of Dr. MacNeven, 7th August, 1798. Appendix iii., Report from the secret committee of the House of Lords, 1798. Appendix xvii., Report from the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

[2] Dumferline, *Life of Abercromby*, p. 19. This life is written by Abercromby's son, and is a mere panegyric.

[3] *Ib.*, p. 73.

[4] Appendix x., Report from the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

"The very disgraceful frequency of courts-martial, and the many complaints of irregularities in the conduct of the troops in this kingdom, having too unfortunately proved the army to be in a state of licentiousness which must render it formidable to every one but the enemy, the Commander-in-Chief thinks it necessary to demand from all generals commanding districts and brigades, as well as commanding officers of regiments, that they exert for themselves, and compel from all officers under their command, the strictest and most unremitting attention to the discipline, good order and conduct of their men, such as may restore the high and distinguished reputation which the British troops have been accustomed to enjoy in every part of the world. It becomes necessary to recur to, and most pointedly to attend to, the standing orders of the kingdom, which, at the same time that they direct military assistance to be given at the requisition of the civil magistrate, positively forbid the troops to act [but in case of attack] without his presence and authority, and the most clear and positive orders are to be given to the officers commanding the party for this purpose."[1]

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[1] Dumferline, *Life of Abercromby*, p. 84.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 85.

[3] *Ib.*, p. 93.

This intemperate order, censuring indiscriminately the entire army, was wholly illegal, for it purported to revoke a Proclamation issued by the highest authority in Ireland, namely the Lord Lieutenant and Council, an authority to which Abercromby himself was subordinate. This proclamation had been issued on the 17th May, 1797, and authorised the military to act without directions from the civil power, because, as was stated in the Proclamation, the exertions of the civil power had proved ineffectual for the suppression of the traitorous and wicked conspiracy which existed, and for the protection of the lives and properties of his Majesty's faithful subjects.[2]

Abercromby's excuse for issuing the order was, that he did not consider the Proclamation to be in force at that time.[3] Lord Camden informed him that, until recalled or until the state of the country was altered, the Proclamation must be considered as still in force.[1] To this, Abercromby replied by entreating Lord Camden to move his Majesty for permission to him to resign.[2] At the same time, before the King had granted his permission, he signified his resignation to the general officers serving in Ireland.[3]

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[1] This order is a great favourite with the anti-English writers, who invariably quote it to prove the excesses of the maligned English soldier. To increase its importance, they even make it plural and call it general orders. The order only imputes "irregularities" to the army, and therefore does not satisfy these writers. Plowden, in defiance of truth and grammar, totally strikes out "irregularities" and makes the order to run thus, "the very disgraceful frequency of courts-martial, and the many complaints *in* the conduct of the troops" (vol. ii., p. 663).

[2] Appendices x., xi., xii., Report from the secret committee of the Commons, 1798.

[3] *Life of Abercromby*, p. 99.

The consequences of Abercromby's order were very serious. It produced general consternation, mingled with indignation, among all loyalists and the officers of the army. Nothing but the terrible condition of the country restrained the Parliament from taking up the matter very strongly or officers from resigning.[4] It was universally circulated by the United Irishmen among their friends as an encouragement to them to proceed in the business of murder and robbery without apprehension.[5] It paralysed the exertions of the military. Two examples of this effect are mentioned by Lord Clare. General Lake's people had notice of the intended attack on the town of Cahir, and sent to the next military station for a force to resist it, but under Abercromby's order not a soldier could stir. About the same time, a patrol came up with a gang of twenty or thirty, who had just robbed two gentlemen's houses of arms and were loaded with the spoil; but, as they did not attack the patrol, the latter did not dare to fire, and the gang went off unmolested.[6]

On the 12th of March, the Leinster provincial committee, fifteen in number, were arrested while sitting in council at the house of Oliver Bond in Dublin.[7] Their papers were also seized at the same time. From these it appeared that an insurrection was on the point of breaking out. One of them ran as follows: "Resolved, that it is the opinion of this committee that if the other Ps. [provinces] be in an equal state of preparation as Leinster, as soon as we can procure the information of their state and their determination to act in concert with the nation, we should immediately proceed to act; and that the Exe^{ve} be requested to take such steps immediately as will tend most expeditiously to bring about an union of the different prov^{s}".[1] On the same day, Thomas A. Emmet, MacNeven, Sweetman and the two Jacksons were arrested in different places in the city, and warrants were issued against Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Sampson.

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[1] *Life of Abercromby*, p. 101.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 104.

[3] *Ib.*, p. 114.

[4] *Beresford's Correspondence*, ii., p. 153.

[5] Lord Clare to Lord Auckland, *Auckland Correspondence*, iii., p. 397.

[6] *Ib.*, p. 396.

[7] Madden gives the names of those arrested at this time, i., p. 411.

The arrest of the Leinster provincial committee and of several of their leaders on the 12th of March was a terrible blow to the United Irishmen. To counteract its depressing effects, they published, on the 17th of the same month, an address to Irishmen, asserting that the arrest was an "explicit and unequivocal declaration of war on the Irish people," which forced 400,000 fighting men, the physical strength of Ireland, to make, in convenient time, their final option between death and self-defence, and proved by evidence more than palpable, that the nation and the Administration could not exist together. It went on to declare that the organisation of Dublin was perfect, that no vacancies existed, and that arrangements had been made to secure for their brethren legal assistance, and concluded with the following words: "Be firm, Irishmen, but be cool and cautious; be patient yet awhile; trust to no unauthorised communications; and above all we warn you, again and again we warn you, against doing the work of tyrants, by *premature*, by *partial* or *divided* exertion. If Ireland shall be forced to throw away the scabbard, let it be at *her own* time, not at *theirs* ".[1]

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[1] The papers found at Bond's house form the Nineteenth Appendix to the Report of the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

Meanwhile the condition of Leinster and Munster was fast becoming desperate. We have already seen that at this time many parts of these provinces " were in the possession of a murderous banditti " ; that " not a night passed without numerous murders " ; and that many of the loyalists in nine counties had been " in the course of one month stript of their arms ". "The whole of the province of Munster and many of the counties of Leinster," wrote Lord Clare, at this time, " are in a complete state of anarchy, if not of open rebellion." " The system of robbery is extending rapidly over large parts of the country, and the gentry have fled universally into towns for refuge. The people do not cultivate the ground, so that, if this proceeds much farther, the best which we can expect will be famine."[2] Mr. Beresford, writing a few days later, gave as gloomy an account of the state of the country. " They [the people] are now, in Leinster, Munster and Connaught, robbing, plundering and burning houses, hay yards, corn, etc. ; murdering witnesses and magistrates ; assassinating every man who they think either is or may be active against them ; and in the middle of the noonday, in the streets of towns, obliging, by force and threats, men to take their oaths and pay contributions for their plans."[3] Under these circumstances Lord Camden was obliged to issue a peremptory command to Abercromby to revoke his general order, and to give immediate directions to the troops for the suppression of the traitorous conspiracy which existed in the country, and for the recovery of the arms which had been taken from loyal subjects. As Abercromby had thrown doubts on the former proclamation, a new proclamation was issued on the 30th of March, stating that the traitorous conspiracy, long existing within the kingdom, had broken out into acts of open rebellion, and giving notice that the most direct and positive orders had been issued to the officers commanding his Majesty's forces to employ them with the utmost vigour and decision for the immediate suppression thereof, and also for the recovery of such arms as had been traitorously taken from the King's loyal subjects. It was also enjoined that they should disarm the rebels and all disaffected persons by the most summary and effectual measures.[1]

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[1] This address is in the Twenty-fifth Appendix to the Report from the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

[2] Lord Clare to Lord Auckland, *Auckland Correspondence*, iii., p. 395.

[3] Mr. Beresford to Lord Auckland, *Ib.*, p. 401.

This proclamation was transmitted by the Lord-Lieutenant to Abercromby, who was directed to proceed into the disturbed districts and enforce its provisions. But Abercromby had no intention of obeying, or of doing his duty. Instead of acting at once with vigour and decision, he published a notice to each county as he approached it, requiring its inhabitants to give up, within ten days, the arms taken from the yeomen and loyal subjects, and threatening, in default of obedience, that troops should be quartered on them in large bodies to live at free quarters. The notice also called upon them to give information respecting concealed arms, but there was not a word in it of disarming the disaffected.[2] This ten days' notice put the insurgents on their guard, and when the soldiers appeared all was quiet. We may judge in what manner Abercromby executed his commission by a letter which he wrote on his return from the South: "I have been through all the disaffected districts and found nothing but tranquillity, the people employed in cultivating their lands, and following their usual avocations".[1] Fortunately for the country, Lake, a man who did not allow wounded vanity to interfere with his duty, was appointed Commander-in-Chief on the 25th of April.

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[1] "This proclamation," says Mr. Lecky, "opened a scene of horrors hardly surpassed in the modern history of Europe" (viii., p. 13). It opened a scene of shameful inaction. At a time when every moment was precious, Abercromby sacrificed twenty-six days to his wounded vanity. The proclamation is very short, and forms the Thirty-sixth Appendix to the Report from the secret committee of the House of Commons.

[2] The form of this notice is the Thirty-seventh Appendix, *Ib.*

Abercromby was four months in Ireland, at a time when he might have rendered invaluable services, yet during all that interval he did nothing but mischief. After the refusal of the Viceroy to adopt his policy of collecting the troops into large bodies, he acted like a madman. Without notice to the Lord-Lieutenant, he overstepped the limits of his own powers, and published an illegal general order, which repealed a Proclamation of the highest authority in Ireland, and paralysed the efforts of the army to suppress rebellion. When informed by the Lord-Lieutenant that the proclamation must be considered as still in force, he sent in his resignation, though he must have known that this step, at such an awful crisis, was a censure on the Viceroy, and an encouragement to the disaffected. At the same time, he informed the general officers throughout Ireland of his resignation, though he was bound to wait until his resignation had been accepted by the King. When directed to employ the soldiers in the disturbed districts of Leinster and Munster, in order to suppress rebellion, recover the arms taken from the yeomanry and loyalists, and disarm the disaffected, he did nothing. His culpable inefficiency is best shown by the last paragraph of the notice he gave to each county: "should the deluded and evil-disposed among the people in this country still persevere in robbing and murdering and committing other acts of violent insubordination to the laws of the country, they are informed that the Commander-in-Chief will be obliged to have recourse to those powers with which he has been invested to bring them to immediate punishment". That is, he was well aware that robberies, murders and other outrages were going on around him, yet, in defiance of his orders, he did nothing to prevent them.

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[1] *Life of Abercromby*, p. 127.

This is the man whom Plowden and Mr. Lecky, with that wonderful perversity of judgment so often seen in their pages, hold up to our admiration. There can be no doubt that many innocent lives, before and after the breaking out of the rebellion, were lost by Abercromby's shameful neglect of duty and obstinate disobedience to orders.[1]

Lake had only a month before him, but he did a great deal within that time. His efforts "had an almost immediate effect in repressing the audacity of the rebels and in restoring tranquillity. The loyal inhabitants were enabled in many places to return in safety to their houses, and murders became less frequent; in many counties, particularly in Kildare and Tipperary, the people, sensible of the madness and wickedness of their conduct, began openly to acknowledge their crimes, surrender their arms, and point out their leaders and seducers—a submission which invariably obtained for them pardon and protection." [1]

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[1] Shortly after his resignation, Abercromby wrote a private letter to his son, explaining why he had given up his command. After some extraordinary accusations against the Viceroy and his advisers, he wrote: "Within these twelve months, every crime, every cruelty that could be committed by Cossacks or Calmucks have been transacted here". It is not at all clear that these words were intended by the writer to apply to the army. But Mr. Lecky, by cutting out several intervening sentences in the letter, has so applied them (compare Lecky's vol. vii., p. 434 with the letter in the *Life of Abercromby*, p. 108). If the words were intended for the army, then they were evidently false. (1) Abercromby in his public order had only accused the soldiers of irregularities. (2) If such horrible crimes had been committed, why did he, the Commander in Chief, not drag them into light and punish them as they deserved, instead of locking them up in his own breast?

The leaders of the conspiracy began to perceive that their cause was losing ground, and that they had no alternative left but to hazard an insurrection or to relinquish their purpose. As one of these leaders said, "the country was tired with the prosecutions, and the people threatened, if the rising did not immediately take place, they would take the oath of allegiance, and give up their arms ".[2] On the 19th of May, Lord Edward Fitzgerald was arrested, and on the 21st, Henry and John Sheares, who had assumed the direction of the conspiracy after the arrest at Bond's. On the 22nd, a message was sent by the Lord-Lieutenant to both Houses of Parliament stating, that upon the application of the magistrates, he had proclaimed the city of Dublin,[3] and that he had received information that the disaffected had formed a plan for possessing themselves of the metropolis, and seizing the seat of Government and the persons of those in authority within the city: and that he had directed every military precaution to be taken.[4] The plan to which the Viceroy alluded, also included the surprise of the camp at Loughlinstown and the artillery station at Chapelizod on the same night, in which attack the counties of Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare were to co-operate. The insurrection in the neighbourhood of Dublin was to be announced to all parts of Ireland by the stoppage of the mail coaches, and it was expected that the North and South would also rise.[1]

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[1] Report from the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1898.

[2] John Sheares. Appendix 20, Report of the secret committee of the Commons, 1798. These words of John Sheares were corroborated very strongly by a statement of Mr. Beresford: "We have positive evidence from three different quarters that it was the intention to rise on to-morrow, and the reason given from each quarter was the same, *viz.*, that now Government were taking such vigorous measures, they must either now rise or give up the game" (Beresford to Lord Auckland, 20th May, 1798, *Auckland Correspondence*, iii., p. 417).

[3] Dublin was proclaimed on the application of the Lord Mayor and twenty-two out of twenty-four aldermen. A few days previously the county of Dublin had been proclaimed on the requisition of fifty-three out of fifty-five magistrates (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii., p. 415).

[4] *Commons' Journals*, xvii., part i., p. 333.

Notwithstanding the military precautions, the signal for rising was given, and on the night of the 23rd May the insurrection broke out.

It is needless to repeat the story of the rebellion, but one remark may be made here.

The Roman Catholics, who joined in it, were not actuated by any racial antipathy to the English or to the Anglo-Irish. This racial principle is an offshoot of the theory which makes Celts and Roman Catholics one and the same. Such a feeling never existed, as is shown by the innumerable marriages which took place between the Irish and the English settlers before the Reformation, and have since taken place in spite of the difference of religion. The Roman Catholics of Ireland are not Celts, except in a few places mentioned hereafter. As long ago as 1662, the author of *Cambrensis Eversus*, himself an Anglo-Irish Roman Catholic, maintained that the majority of the inhabitants of Ireland were of English blood. In 1800, Dr. Duigenan, who was Irish of the Irish, declared that there were few in the kingdom with Irish surnames who had no British blood in their veins.[2] The Roman Catholics have never displayed the racial dislike of which we now hear, even during their civil wars. In 1641, the majority of the leaders of the Southern insurgents were Anglo-Irish. In 1688-89, the favourite heroes of the Roman Catholics were Tirconnell, an Englishman, and Sarsfield, an Anglo-

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[1] Report from the secret committee of the House of Commons, 1798.

[2] *Fair Representation of the present Political State of Ireland*, Dublin, 1800.

Irishman. In 1798, many of the leaders in the rebellion were Protestants and Anglo-Irish. The six counties in which the rebellion of 1798 raged, *viz.*, Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Carlow, Wicklow and Wexford, had been most thickly planted by immigrants from England, and the majority of the peasantry in these counties had British names.[1] Four of the counties had formed the English Pale. Wexford is a very remarkable case. The inhabitants of this county were mainly descended from the early English settlers, but they had become Roman Catholics, and in the rebellion of 1798, fought against the English Government with splendid courage and partial success. While the Eastern counties were thus disturbed, the whole West, where, in the mountainous parts of Connaught and the mountains of Cork and Kerry, the remnants of the Irish Celts still lingered and preserved their language, was free from any taint of rebellion. In truth, the long hostility, which England and Great Britain have experienced in Ireland, has come, not from the kindly and social Irish Celts, whose missionary labours in the past have rendered their name famous, but from men of the mixed race, in whose veins there ran English or Scotch blood.

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[1] *Fair Representation of the present Political State of Ireland*, Dublin, 1800.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LEGISLATIVE UNION OF 1800.

ALL sorts and conditions of men have assailed the Legislative Union of 1800, on the ground that it was passed by bribery; and corruption they add for the purpose of lending a blacker colour to their invective. All separatists who are enemies to the connection between Ireland and Great Britain, all repealers who would reduce it to the single tie of a common executive; all home-rulers who are repealers with a new name, and all who are incapable of conceiving the idea of empire, have united to decry it. Even British premiers and members of British Cabinets have not been ashamed to join the motley throng in the endeavour to undo the work of the great statesmen, who secured to England that she should develop in her own way, and not according to French ideas.

The leading politicians who have endeavoured to dismember the heart of the empire for party purposes, all allege the same excuse for their conduct, namely, that the Legislative Union of 1800 was carried by bribery. These men appear to be wholly unacquainted with the wise maxim of public law, *quod non fieri debuit, factum valet.* In international matters, they say, there must be no limitation to, no forgetfulness of, complaints. The rule of private law, that it is for the benefit of the State that disputes should cease, has no application to questions between nations. The most remote transactions may be reviewed and confirmed or annulled. They cannot see that the manner in which the Scotch or Irish Union was effected is a question, not for statesmen, but for the historian. Even if we grant that the Irish Union was carried by bribery, that fact would furnish no reason for its repeal. The real questions for a statesman are: has it worked well or ill? has it produced oppression or misery? or has it given to the Irish people, without distinction of class, benefits which were not even dreamt of before? It has given emancipation to the Roman Catholics; a poor law to the starving; education to the needy; medical assistance to all; and to the peasantry a land code more favourable to their industry than that of any other country in the world. These are strong arguments for the Irish Union, but they make no impression on some of our politicians.

Of every individual in the classes mentioned above as opponents of the Irish Union, the same thing may be affirmed, namely, that the loudness of his clamour against it is in exact proportion to his ignorance of the whole matter.

Mr. Lecky has furnished us with an amusing instance of the perfect confidence of ignorance. In a little book, published at a time when all his knowledge of Irish history was derived from a foolish and untruthful book written by the younger Grattan, a repealer,[1] he told his readers that "corruption so vast, so flagrant, and so shameful that it has no parallel in the history of representative institutions" was made use of to pass the Union.[2] Ten years later he expressed similar opinions in a second edition of his crude and premature production. In the second volume of his *History of England* he tells us that "the sacrifice of nationality," for so he absurdly terms the Union of two kindred Parliaments in the same empire, "was extorted by the most enormous corruption in the history of representative institutions ".[1] Even in his eighth volume he says " a shameful traffic in votes began, and many men of great name and position in the world were bought as literally as cattle in the cattle market ".[2] These are grave accusations against an International Treaty of Union, carried on and concluded under the eyes of the greatest Minister that ever directed the efforts of Great Britain. But they suggest the reflection: What punishment is due to the writer who circulates them and is unable to prove them? Mr. Lecky's attempts at proof are as ridiculous as ineffectual. Though he knew that Lord Cornwallis had declared that his Government had neither the means to bribe, nor the wish to resort to such vile measures,[3] he gravely quotes a passage from that nobleman's correspondence, in which Cornwallis expressed his hatred of jobbing, as a proof of his own numerous and individual acts of bribery. The only other proof of the corruption which he termed vast, flagrant, and shameful is even more ridiculous, namely, " one supporter of the Government in the House of Commons appears to have been excused a debt of £3,000 ".[4] We know nothing of the details of this matter, nor does Mr. Lecky. It may have been a perfectly innocent transaction. But having made accusations against the Union at times when he knew nothing about it, he was obliged to support his statements by some show of evidence. Hence it is that he produced this absurd instance, which he does not even positively affirm, but brings it forward under an " it appears ".

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[1] *Grattan's Life.*

[2] *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*, p. 140.

Such is the flimsy evidence upon which we are asked to impeach or set aside the great and necessary Settlement of 1800—necessary for the security of Great Britain, ten times more necessary for distracted and ill-governed Ireland. No better evidence is forthcoming or will ever be produced. Two British premiers have advocated Home Rule—the first step to which must be the repeal of the Act of Union. Prime Ministers, with hands full of patronage, never want volunteers to assist them. We may be certain that every nook and cranny in which an Irish record might be supposed to lie have been searched and turned inside out to find an incriminating document. But in vain; as, indeed, the miserable nonsense which is produced as evidence sufficiently proves.

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[1] Vol. ii., p. 60.

[2] Vol. viii., p. 337.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii., p. 180.

[4] *History of England*, viii., p. 409.

One indisputable fact clears the air of all the groundless assertions of Mr. Lecky and other partisans. The Legislative Union of 1800 was gladly accepted by nineteen-twentieths of the inhabitants of Ireland, as a short analysis will show. The population of Ireland was then five millions. Of these, four millions were Roman Catholics; the Presbyterians amounted to about half a million, and the Episcopalians to the same number.

The Roman Catholics, who are now, as a body, opposed to a connection with Great Britain, gave to the Union in 1800 a warm and hearty support. Their peerage was strongly in favour of it. Their four archbishops, fourteen[1] bishops, and the agent of the secular bishops were as strongly for it. Nor were the inferior clergy behind their bishops. Grattan was so irritated by the assistance which they leant to the measure that in his speech on the 15th of January, 1800, he called them "a band of prostituted men engaged in the support of Government".[2]

Though it is an undoubted fact that the Roman Catholics supported the Union, we must not attach too much importance to it. They did so merely in the hope of sooner obtaining their emancipation. They knew that it would not be granted by their native Parliament on account of the danger to the Protestant Establishment, and the fear of weakening existing titles to land. But as soon as emancipation had been granted, they endeavoured to obtain a repeal of that Union which they themselves had earnestly forwarded. Nor was their conduct inconsistent. From the time when the power of the tribal chiefs was broken by the Elizabethan conquest, and the bishops, who up to that time had possessed very little power, became the leaders of the Irish community, a deep disaffection has lurked in the Roman Catholic mind. Emancipation was the first step to power, and to obtain it they sacrificed for a time their hatred to a Protestant State.

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[1] One bishop, Dr. Hussey, was omitted in Ingram's *History of the Union of* 1800.

[2] It would be absurd to repeat here the proofs of these facts. They are set forth in Ingram's *History of the Union of* 1800.

The Presbyterians had learned a lesson which they have never forgotten. Their body was in favour of the Legislative Union. In October, 1799, Lord Cornwallis made a tour in the North for the purpose of learning the sentiments of the people on the subject of a Union. He was well satisfied with his observation, and in a letter to the Duke of Portland speaks of his "complete success in the Northern counties".[1]

The only opposition offered to the Union came from about one-half of the Episcopalians. The first trial of strength between the opponents of that measure and its supporters took place in the Commons as early as the 22nd of January, 1799, when the members for and against it were 106 and 105. In the Lords, there was a strong and decided majority in favour of the measure.

This first division in the Commons suggests some reflections. Where, it may be asked, was that army of 116 placemen, who, we are told, voted regularly with the Government? They did not make their appearance on this occasion. The first observation a student of Irish History makes is on the small influence the British Government exercised over the Irish Parliament both before and after 1782. That Government was absolutely powerless before the prejudices, the desires, or the supposed interests of the Irish Parliament. With all its alleged power and patronage, the British Government laboured in vain for eighty years to obtain equal rights for the Presbyterians. It could not save the King's Hereditary Revenue from being deliberately wasted. The Settlement of 1782 was extorted from it. It could not induce the Irish Parliament in 1785 to accept the most beneficial offer ever made to a nation. Nor could it restrain the same Parliament in its madness from establishing in 1789 a precedent for separation. Now, when the powers, patronage, places, and peculiar privileges of the Irish Parliament were threatened by the proposed Union, we may be certain that it was not more tractable than on former occasions. But the wide-spread conspiracy of the United Irishmen, the repeated attempts of the French, the bloody rebellion of 1798, the almost universal disaffection of the Roman Catholics, and the dreadful condition of the country, had converted many to the absolute necessity of strengthening the empire by a close union between its parts.

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[1] Cornwallis, *Correspondence*, iii., p. 140.

Nothing in the history of the Union is so wonderful as the support given to it from the first by a full half of the Episcopalians. It was to have been expected that the whole of that favoured body would have offered a strenuous opposition to the measure. For every change was sure to diminish their power and importance. As matters stood, they were in possession of everything. They monopolised the whole power and patronage of the kingdom. The Parliament was theirs. The Corporations were theirs. The close boroughs were theirs. All the offices throughout the kingdom, great or small, were filled by them. Every member of their body, from the lordly borough-monger to the smallest tradesman in a close borough, had an immediate and personal interest in a Parliament, which so freely distributed among them the revenue of the country in absurd bounties and premiums. Yet, in the opinion of many of them, all these peculiar advantages were overbalanced by the frightful insecurity which threatened all that was dear to them. "It has been asserted," said William Johnson, afterwards a judge, "that the supporters of the Union have been bought by the Minister. No, sir; I will tell you what has bought them—the state of the country and the state of Europe. What has bought them has bought me; unacquainted with the Minister, the Castle, or its followers, I took up the question of an Incorporate Union. I took it up in the bosom of privacy and retirement; it was forced on me by the growing calamities of the country, and I deliberated on it, uninfluenced by a single motive other than an anxious desire to meet the peculiar evils by which we were afflicted."[1]

Some other statements of Mr. Lecky deserve attention. He tells us that the whole unbribed intellect of Ireland was against the Union, or, in other words, that the whole intellect of Ireland that was in favour of that measure was bribed. The infinite folly, prejudice and ignorance displayed in this assertion are sufficient to destroy the credit of the writer who makes it. According to Mr. Lecky, the chief judges of the land, the only two statesmen the Irish Parliament ever produced, Clare and Castlereagh, and the noblest teacher of religion then living, Alexander Knox, were bribed. But why speak of individuals? All the intellect among the majority of the Protestant bishops, or among the Presbyterian ministers and laity, or among the Roman Catholic bishops, priests and laity, or among the vast majority of the Lords, or among the fast-growing majority in the Commons, were all bribed. Let us compare this monstrous indictment against the larger part of the intellect of Ireland with the language of William, afterwards Sir William, Smith, a gentleman who took a distinguished part in the Union debates, and knew what he was talking about: "You [Grattan] cannot deny that this measure [Union] meets with countenance from much of the property, intelligence and virtue of the country, and you flippantly allege that the plan, which they thus zealously support, so manifestly extinguishes the Constitution, that you will not waste time in proving so plain a truth! This you state, *en passant*, as the effect of a measure, which I, on the contrary, on my conscience believe to be that which, since Ireland was a country, has received the most honourable and disinterested support, and has been encountered with the most corrupt and selfish opposition".[1]

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[1] Report of the debate in the House of Commons on Friday, 14th of February, 1800, Dublin, 1800.

But let us ask, where or with whom did this intellect, upon which Mr. Lecky lays such stress, reside? Not certainly with Grattan; who uttered as much nonsense about the Legislative Union as he had spoken about a Commercial Union in 1785, about the Regency question in 1789, and in his *Address to his Fellow Citizens* in 1797; and who, like his admirer, Mr. Lecky, was unable to distinguish between the extinction of a Parliament and its union with another which possessed a common estate, *viz.*, the King. Not with Plunket, who, with the

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[1] A letter to Henry Grattan, Dublin, 1800.

Scotch Union staring him in the face, denied the competence of the Irish Parliament to unite itself with a kindred Parliament in the same empire, and spoke the treason for which, when put into practice, he prosecuted capitally Robert Emmet three years later. Not with the Speaker, who published his speech against the Union, forty pages of which were taken up in proving a truism, namely, that the Settlement of 1782 was final, and the remainder occupied either in retracting the opinions he had advanced in 1785, or making sophistical statements respecting the trade of Ireland. The truth is that the intellect of the supporters of the Union was immeasurably superior to that of its opponents. Where among the Opposition was a match to be found for the political wisdom and foresight of Lord Clare? If the advice of this statesman had been taken by the Irish Parliament in 1789, its successor might now be sitting in College Green. But Grattan and the Pigmies prevailed, and established an argument for Union, which all the efforts of the Opposition could not do away. Or was there one among the opponents of the Union who possessed the calm judgment and debating power of Lord Castlereagh? Take all the speeches of the anti-Unionists, lump them together, and then compare them with the unanswerable argument of William Smith,[1] and their poverty in reasoning will clearly appear. There was plenty of denunciation, threatening, declamation and inflammatory language in their speeches, but argument and reasoning were absent.[2]

The same superiority may be observed in the Unionist pamphlets over those of its opponents. Four of those written in favour of that measure are of a very high order of merit: of these, three were written by William Smith, and one by Mr. Redford, a barrister. If these had referred to a crisis in Great Britain, they would have been carefully preserved for the use of future students; but, as they treat of the affairs of Ireland, they are unknown and neglected.

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[1] Substance of Mr. William Smith's Speech on the subject of a Legislative Union, Dublin, 1799.

[2] Madden makes some sensible remarks on the inflammatory speeches of Plunket, Saurin, Parsons, Bushe, and Grattan, in the years 1799 and 1800 (*United Irishmen*, iii., 489).

Mr. Lecky tells us that the Union was decisively rejected by the House of Commons in 1799.[1] Now, what are the facts? The speech from the throne on the 22nd of January, 1799, merely invited the Commons to take into their consideration the means of uniting the two kingdoms more closely. An Address to the King was moved, in which the House undertook to give their consideration to the means of strengthening the connection. The Opposition endeavoured to have this undertaking removed from the Address, and were beaten by a majority of one. The Address was reported on the 24th of January, and on that day the Opposition renewed their efforts and succeeded by five of a majority. Immediately after this victory of the Opposition, George Ponsonby attempted to pledge the House against any further discussion of the Union, but the House would not even listen to the proposal. On the 15th of February, Lord Corry made another attempt of the same kind. He moved that the House should consider an Address to the King, declaring a separate Parliament to be essential to the interests of Ireland. The House refused to consider the motion, and rejected it by a majority of twenty. In April, the Opposition weakened themselves greatly by their unfortunate Regency Bill. By introducing this bill, they admitted the imperfect condition of the connection between the two countries; by dropping it they confessed that they were unable to remedy its defects. On the 15th of May, Lord Castlereagh moved for an adjournment to the 1st of June, on which day the Parliament was prorogued to the 15th of January, 1800. From this short recital it will appear (1) that during the year 1799 the Union was not brought forward by Government, or proposed for the consideration of the House, and (2) that, when it was dragged in by the Opposition, the House carefully guarded itself against rejecting it or preventing its discussion.

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[1] Vol. viii., p. 402.

Another of Mr. Lecky's statements is that between the prorogation of Parliament in 1799 and the debates of 1800 "no less than sixty-three seats became vacant".[1] The authority cited for this statement is *Grattan's Speeches*, iv., p. 37. But Grattan never made such an assertion. When we examine the reference, we find the statement attributed to Mr. Saurin, the gentleman who had solicited the officers of the yeomanry corps in Dublin to sign a declaration that they would lay down their arms if the Union was brought forward.[2] To this imperfect information Mr. Lecky adds "the great majority of these changes was due to the conversion of the borough-owners". This is, as usual with the author, mere guess-work. The fact is that there must have been some changes and vacancies at the close of the session of 1799, but of their number we have no evidence upon which we can rely. They were not owing to the conversion of the borough-owners, nor had the Government anything to do with them. They occurred in the following way. It was a rule of honour seldom violated, that a member who sat for a close borough should vote as his patron did: if he found himself unable to do so, he was bound to retire. When Parliament met on the 22nd January, 1799, there were vague rumours as to the intentions of Government, but there was nothing to disturb the relations between the borough-owners and their nominees. But the Opposition, hoping to take the Government by surprise, prematurely brought forward the question of Union, and it was debated several times during the session of 1799. At the close of the session, the reckoning between the patrons of boroughs and their nominees naturally began. Many of the former were opposed to the Union. Thus, Lord Enniskillen and his connections controlled nine votes, and Lord Kingston five against the Union.[1] The Duke of Leinster, Lords Downshire, Arran, Charlemont, Belmore, Granard, all anti-Unionists, possessed boroughs. On the other hand, many borough-owners were Unionists. As soon as the struggle became certain, the nominees on both sides, who differed from their patrons on the question of Union, quietly vacated their seats according to the rule which none might violate without loss of reputation.

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[1] vol. viii., p. 402.

[2] Cornwallis, *Correspondence*, iii., p. 29.

The Union altered and diminished most materially the position and privileges of the Irish Peers. It reduced them from the status of Lords of Parliament, sitting in their own right, and representing themselves alone, to that of a represented body. They were also shabbily treated in the matter of representation in the Imperial Parliament. A third of their former number was allowed in the case of the Irish Commons, but the Peers were restricted to less than one-seventh. To an impartial observer, the diminution of their honours, powers and privileges, and the scanty number of representatives allowed them, would be a strong argument for a large promotion of the most powerful among them to the British peerage. But all such reasoning is foreign to Mr. Lecky. In his desire to disparage the Union, he scents bribery everywhere, even among the new representative peers, though they were not to be appointed till after the Union had been carried. "There was another form of bribe," he writes, "which had probably not less influence. If the Union was carried, a new object of ambition of the first magnitude would be at once opened to the Irish peerage. No promotion in that peerage was likely to be so much coveted as the position of representative peer, which was to be enjoyed by twenty-eight members of the Irish peerage, and was to place them for life in the Imperial House of Lords."[1]

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[1] Beresford, *Correspondence*, ii., p. 209.

Mr. Lecky was so bent on making an attack on the Union that he was unable to see the absurdity of this statement. He wishes us to believe that a remote chance of being elected a representative peer was a sufficient inducement, or, as he terms it, a bribe, for a hereditary legislator to vote for a measure which degraded his order and reduced himself to be a candidate for that honour which he already possessed in his own right. To appear as representatives in an Assembly, which was almost entirely composed of hereditary legislators, must have been a grief to many of those who had been equally great in their own country. The proposed change in the Irish peerage was, with many, a strong argument against the Union, and furnished Mr. Foster with materials for one of his appeals to the pride of the country.[2]

Without a tittle of evidence, Mr. Lecky assures us that all the peerages, granted during the administration of Lord Cornwallis, with the exception of eleven, were given and accepted as bribes. He makes no allowance for the noble services of many before and during the rebellion, nor for the support given to the Union. This support was very notable, and given under circumstances which would have deterred many. All who worked or voted for the Union had to bear, during the long struggle, every contumely and reproach, for the anti-Unionist represented them as venal traitors and betrayers of their country. As William Smith wrote to Grattan, "mortified at perceiving the change of public opinion, enraged to find those prejudices subsiding, which alone concealed the weakness and deformity of their cause—your party attempted to brand with the title of apostates all those who have listened to reason or reflection; who have magnanimously retracted an hasty opinion, and preferred encountering the obloquy of a faction to working the injury of their country".[1]

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[1] Vol. viii., p. 398.

[2] Plowden, iii., p. 1,037.

The Royal assent to the Union Bill was given on the 1st of August, 1800, and, the next day, the doors were closed on the most worthless and incompetent Assembly that ever misgoverned a country.

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[1] Letter to Henry Grattan, M.P., 10th February, 1800, Dublin.

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